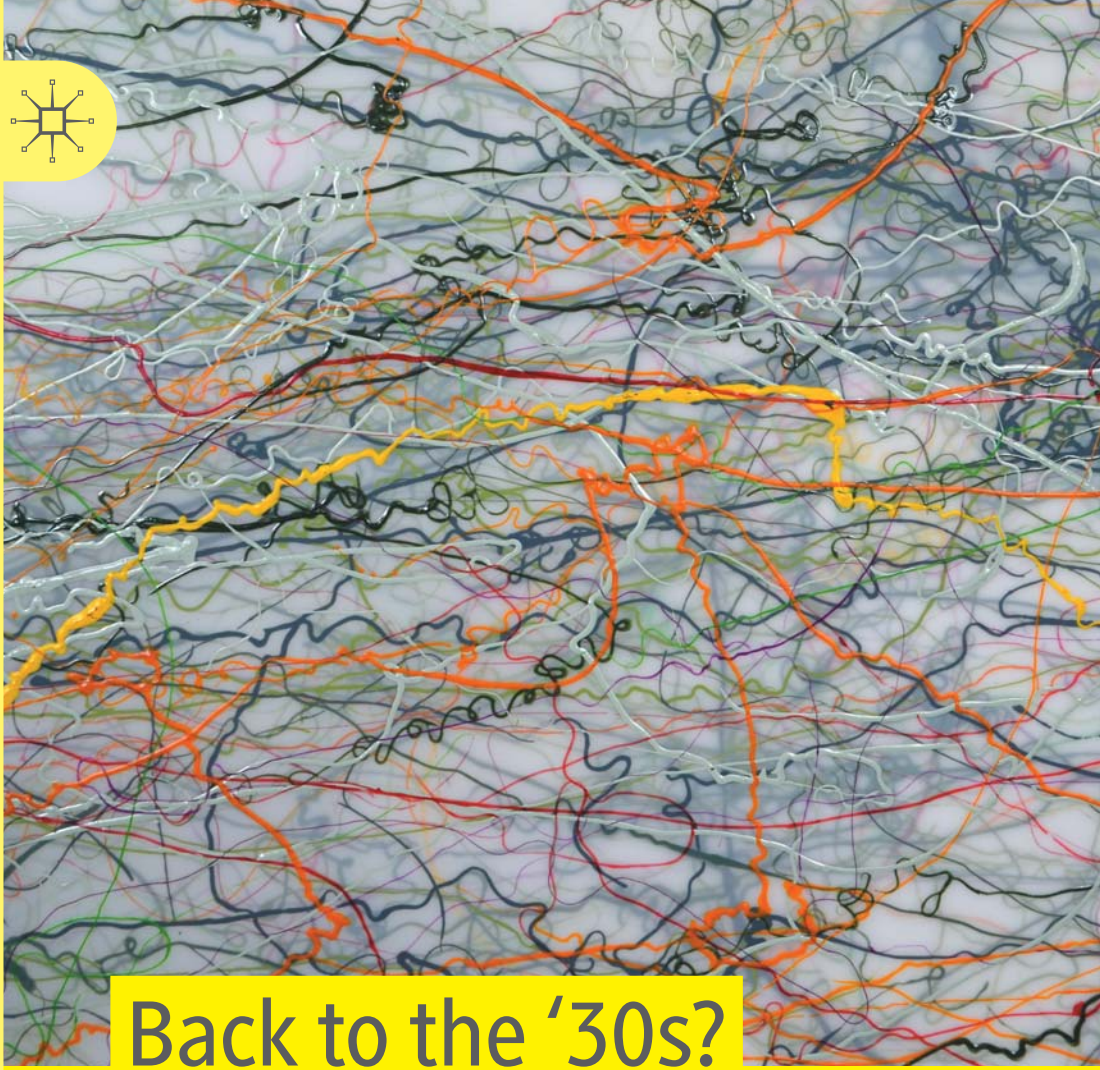


Back to the '30s?

Recurring Crises of Capitalism, Liberalism, and Democracy

Edited by
Jeremy Rayner · Susan Falls
George Souvlis · Taylor C. Nelms

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Back to the '30s?

"All history is contemporary history. But very few historians self-consciously explicate what this might mean. Translating the dictum into concretely focused investigations is rarer still. Pressing beyond the facile analogies and over-hasty comparisons, this finely conceived volume demonstrates carefully and persuasively how exactly Europe's interwar crises can help us to think effectively about the present."

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"By juxtaposing the last decade of global politics with the decade that followed the New York Stock Exchange crash of 1929, *Back to the '30s?* piles up parallels between fascism's golden age and the most recent rise of authoritarianism. Masterfully compiled, this book offers a compelling socio-political thesis, an exceptional collection of analyses, and a keen sensitivity to history's most important questions. Its strong emphasis on the Global South, Eastern Europe, East Asia, Australia, and the European periphery lends it a unique force and relevance. All readers interested in the rise of international right-wing populism and neo-fascism will want this on their shelf."

—Nitzan Lebovic, *Associate Professor of History, Lehigh University, USA*

"Comparing the 1930s to the 2010s, through a multidisciplinary approach applied to a variety of cases, this very interesting collection helps to understand today's Gramscian Interregnum by pointing to the interrelation of specific forms of capitalist accumulation and authoritarian political turns, as well as to counter-hegemonic practices."

—Donatella Della Porta, *Professor of Sociology and Political Science, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy*

"Amidst the maelstrom of financial emergencies, violent institutional read-justments, hegemonic crises and exploding counter-hegemonic alternatives,

the first decades of the twenty-first century have invited direct comparisons with the 'dark' 1930s. Mapping critical insights from, while also underlining caveats that inhere in, historical analogies between the two moments offers a much-needed corrective to the extremes of historical uniqueness or the notion of a 'back to the 1930s' déjà vu. This uniquely wide-ranging and intellectually prolific volume provides so much more that a collection of diverse methodological and geographic perspectives on the merits and limits of historical parallelism. Collectively, the twenty contributions chart ways in which the experience of the 1930s can be productively summoned to inform both critiques and validations of a historically analogous perspective no matter how distinctive and different the current moment may be."

—Aristotle Kallis, *Professor of Modern & Contemporary History, Keele University*

"Capitalism and liberal democracy are once again in crisis. What can we learn about our future and the possibilities for mass action from looking back at the 1930s? The authors of this volume provide insightful and penetrating answers by examining rightwing movements of the 1930s and today in a variety of countries and by exploring the role of ideas in shaping peoples' understandings of their historical moments and in inspiring both action and resignation. This volume will spur new thinking and can help left activists gain a better understanding of where to focus their energies."

—Richard Lachman, *Professor of Sociology, University of Albany, State University of New York, USA*

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ISBN 978-3-030-41585-3 ISBN 978-3-030-41586-0 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0

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Cover illustration: Sumptuous Wreckage of the Present by Liz Sargent (detail). Provided by courtesy of the artist. Medium: acrylic on dura-lar Date: 2019 Dimensions: 29" × 44" Threadlike masses ascend and descend from an implied horizon line, while webs of varying movement layer over one another. Evocative of a landscape ending where it begins, the gradually shifting patterns crescendo and dissipate as they repeat again, an imperceptible order emerges. My process tangles and twists, unravels and knots, snarls and entraps—drifts, loops and drops. Contrasting action-spaces engender both deliberate and random actions and thoughts. The edges dissolve between land, water, atmosphere, and human activity.

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

To the writers and workers of the 2130s

Prologue

As *Back to the '30s?* goes to press, the world is facing another potentially transformative crisis: the COVID-19 pandemic, accompanied by the "worst economic downturn since the Great Depression," according to the IMF. Worse, that is, since the Great Recession, whose comparability to the Great Depression provided one major inspiration for the present volume. This crisis could be understood as a singular event brought on by a freak virus, or—as some of the contributors to this volume would argue—as an only partially-contingent outcome of a longer period of stagnation, "downswing," "financial expansion," or "systemic chaos," with structural similarities to the interwar period. As we observe in the introduction to this volume, the world economy has been depressed for most of the period since 2008, while the coronavirus shock exposed the degree to which the "recovery" from that crisis depended on the accumulation of debt, including a huge overhang of junky corporate bonds and the proliferation of "zombie" firms that must borrow just to pay interest. Even more than in 2008, US and European central banks responded to the Great Lockdown with a massive credit expansion (less so China, which now faces new constraints). This injection of credit did not stop unemployment from expanding at a historically unprecedented rate, as even healthy businesses were shuttered to control the pandemic. It remains to be seen whether a chain of defaults will lead to an enduring depression.

There are other historical resonances in this moment, beyond the obvious comparisons to the pandemic of 1918. There were invocations of the Second World War: Trump took to calling himself a "wartime president," at least for a time, Guterres, the UN Secretary General, spoke of the "greatest challenge since WW II," etc. The political significance of this rhetoric, from solidarity to suppression of dissent, might merit its own dedicated study. Economically, however, the Great Lockdown looks very little like a war. Viruses do not require massive expenditures of material; on the contrary, the rate of destruction, and turnover, of things has decreased enormously. If we are in a period of stagnation with an overhang of debt, the manufacture of masks and respirators will not get us out of it, in the way the Second World War ended the Great Depression.

Politically, the signs are ambiguous. Some have predicted that coronavirus will spell the end of the right-wing authoritarian populist resurgence, or have looked forward to a new, more expansive solidarity grounded by a renewed welfare state, or even the supersession of capitalism. Others are wary. Giorgio Agamben seems sure that we are headed for a quasi-permanent reduction to "bare life": if he was roundly and rightly critiqued for his callousness toward coronavirus deaths, and inability to appreciate the expansive *bios* of social distancing as solidarity, he may also be at least partially right about these long-term effects, as COVID-19 makes for still-unknown biopolitical potentials, perhaps including increased policing and surveillance. On the other hand, one of the most tangible results so far has been the rise of Black Lives Matter, both one of the largest social movements in US history, and a movement with global reach, challenging not only racist state violence but the very apparatus of policing itself. At the same time, while social democrats, liberals, and most of those who still believe in responsible public conduct and policy have pursued containment with a remarkable degree of unanimity, the "populist" right has produced a striking variety of reactions: some, such as Bolsonaro and Trump, have downplayed the risks or fomented protests against containment measures (with predictably disastrous results), while others, such as Orbán, have used the crisis as an excuse to effectively put an end to the remaining freedoms of liberal democracy. The 1930s produced a biopolitics—necropolitics—of genocide, most iconically (but not only) in the Nazi camps. What bio/necropolitics, and what political economy, might emerge from the

conjuncture of pandemic, depression, and rising right-wing authoritarianism? We hope and expect that this volume will provide some modest insights with which to address this urgent question.

Jeremy Rayner
Susan Falls
George Souvlis
Taylor C. Nelms

Acknowledgments

This collection was jumpstarted by a series of discussions between the editors, as we began to puzzle about the kinds of comparisons we saw being drawn between the contemporary moment and the first decades of the twentieth century. It started, that is, with an observation, but this book took shape through conversation. Its first form was as a conference panel at the 2017 meetings of American Anthropological Association organized by Jeremy Rayner and Taylor Nelms. We wanted to find a way to think across borders (geographic, disciplinary, linguistic, and temporal) about the echoes of history—and about how it is that people come to hear and to enact those echoes in particular ways. We were overwhelmed by the response. Our first thanks go to the initial participants on that panel (Nicholas Copeland, Chungse Jung, Bryan Moorefield, and Zoë West, who gave papers alongside Susan Falls and Jeremy Rayner). While not everyone on our panel developed a chapter for this book, the explorations we made together helped to forge our initial paths.

As a book manuscript, the project gathered momentum and took on a shape and expansiveness we could never have imagined, largely due to the inspired work of George Souvlis.

Many contributors developed ideas for this book during the Historical Materialism Athens Conference 2019 on panels such as "Back to the 30s? Crisis and Transition," "Back to the 30s? Nationalism, Populism, and the Limits of Liberalism," and "Crisis, Rupture and European Constitutional Imaginaries." Others presented work on these chapters at the 2019

Historical Materialism Conference in London, at the 2019 American Anthropology Association Conference, the 2019 Society for the Anthropology of North America Conference, or elsewhere. We are extremely grateful to all of the contributors who joined us in this project–each one of whom worked diligently to prepare highly specialized areas of research, literature, and theoretical concerns for a wide audience of readers.

We are especially thankful to Mary Al-Sayed and her assistant, Madison Allums at Palgrave Macmillan for their ongoing support, guidance, and patience. We thank the many colleagues who gave us feedback on materials at every stage, especially the anonymous reviewers of the proposal whose insightful comments sharpened the overall direction of our collection. Taken together, the chapters presented here, along with the art, activism, and scholarship that all of these chapters engage, suggest how a wide-eyed reading of history can help us to shape the strategies that will one day take us beyond the long shadow of the 1930s.

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Yearbook of European Law. He is currently working on a monograph on a constitutional history of European integration from the 1930s to the recent Euro-crisis, *The Reconstitution of Europe: Lineages of Authoritarian Liberalism*.

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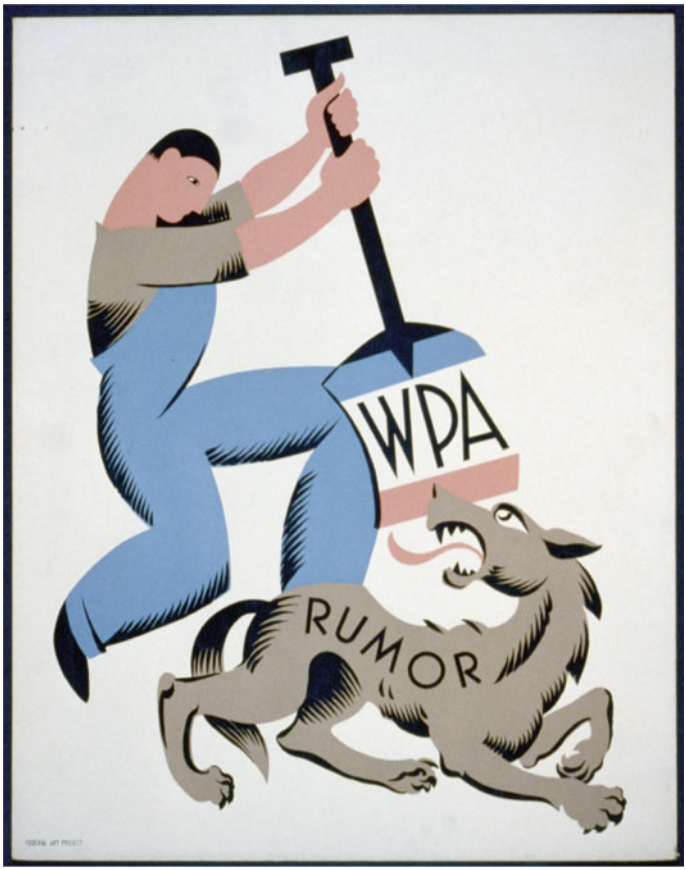


Fig. 1.1 Silkscreen by Vera Bock [between 1939 and 1941] as WPA federal art project

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Back to the 30s?

Jeremy Rayner, Susan Falls, George Souvlis, and Taylor C. Nelms

The 1930s are a major preoccupation of contemporary public culture. To be sure, the decade never really went away: Economic catastrophe, fascism, genocide, antisemitism, racism and xenophobia, rampant militarism, deep social and economic divisions—these all haunt our collective memory as preeminent examples of the worst that capitalism and the modern state have to offer, regularly invoked in ways both serious (e.g., Agamben 1998) and trivial (e.g., Godwin 1994).[1] But at the end of

[1]Godwin is best known for the facetious "law" he formulated in 1991, usually stated along the lines of the following: "As an online discussion grows longer, the probability of a comparison involving Nazis or Hitler approaches one."

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_1

the twenty-first-century's second decade, comparisons to the 1930s have become more frequent and more urgent, raised by apparent similarities between the Great Depression and the Great Recession, historical fascism and today's right-wing "populism" (Fig. 1.1). While few would deny that there are lessons to be learned from the study of the past, there is also concern that a culture of comparison might reductively misread or even sensationalize the present. Controversies about whether or not it is appropriate to refer to certain politicians as "fascists," or to contemporary right-wing movements as "Nazis," or to the spectacle of engineered human suffering on the US southern border as "concentration camps" (rather than "migrant detention centers"), indicate some of the rhetorical and ethical stakes involved.

Often, debate over the appropriateness of the comparison seems to displace suffering and fear in the present. But some of our most fundamental concepts—of change, progress, agency, economy, democracy—do seem to be in play. It is worth recalling that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, received opinion held that the future belonged to liberal democracy and that monetary policy had forever tamed the business cycle—both variants of a linear, progressive telling of history that has arguably been the predominant temporal consciousness of capitalist modernity. Against this, the suggestion that the past has in some sense returned (or that we have returned to the past) is inherently unsettling—yet possibly also galvanizing, as Walter Benjamin (1968, 253–264) claimed, writing at the brink of death at the end of the cataclysmic 1930s. A sudden curve in what seemed a straight road brings promise as well as danger.

The essays in this volume take on the question of what we might learn by holding the interwar period and the contemporary moment up to each other, while remaining attentive to the complexities and nuances of both. This approach sets the contributions of this book apart from the increasingly commonplace comparisons between these periods. In line with the standard division of intellectual labor and habits of thought, most approaches isolate economics from politics, taking up *either* the comparison of the Great Recession and the Great Depression *or* that of contemporary right-wing populism and interwar fascism. No secret that such a separation of politics from economics, whether analytical artifice or ideological maneuver, renders the economy politically neutral and the political process innocent of class and money power. Indeed, thinking through crises of economics and politics separately facilitates their tractability within reigning liberal capitalist histories, epistemologies, and

policy frameworks. Reduced to two-dimensional caricatures or presented as abstract logics that can be extracted from their respective moments, financial crisis and fascist politics can seemingly be avoided through sensible policies and a recommitment to liberal ideals and institutions. As if the political system can be expected to act in the general interest to contain economic disaster, while the crisis of liberal democracy can be addressed without confronting capitalism's systemic inequalities.

The contributors to this volume are attentive to the lessons to be gained from seeing crises of capitalism and liberalism as aspects of a common historical process. "If you don't want to talk about capitalism," Horkheimer famously wrote in 1939, "then you had better keep quiet about fascism" (cited by Gandesha, this volume). Importantly, as a group, they also consider the economic and the political together with the social and the cultural, including the dynamics of social reproduction—of race, gender, and generation—at the heart of both the micropolitics of everyday interaction and the systemic contours of domination. The particular approaches taken, and problems emphasized, are diverse and varied. The chapters that follow offer up histories of ideas, structural analysis and critique, and national and regional case studies. They feature topics that do not often appear in predominant discourse on the two periods, from prostitution to poetry , as well as geographical areas that are often left out of the comparative frame, such as Latin America and East Asia. They are also flexible in terms of periodization. The "1930s" in our title can be taken literally or as a convenient synecdoche for the interwar period, or even for a longer period of "systemic chaos" (e.g., Arrighi 2010), depending on the national and regional context, empirical focus, and analytical approach. The contemporary moment is similarly open to distinct temporal interpretations. The effort is, not to put too fine a point on it, a "timely" one, for the goal is less the parsing of years than the simultaneous mobilization and interrogation of timeliness as it manifests in historical comparison.

Comparative Structures: Homogeneity, Continuity, Repetition

In fact, the question of the relationship of the 1930s to our contemporary moment again raises fundamental questions of how we understand the

structure of temporal comparison, indeed the very relationship of "structure" to "event" (see, e.g., Koselleck 1985; Roitman 2013). The presentism that predominates in social science (and in capitalist modernity generally) arguably assumes the question away; the present is either entirely distinct or all time is "homogeneous and empty," as Benjamin famously put it (1968, 261). Many discussions of the contemporary moment in light of the 1930s follow this temporal framework: The past may be an explanatory resource, a source of lessons that can be imported into the present, but there is no organic relationship between these moments. As if financial crises, authoritarian populisms, and genocidal xenophobia, were simply things that happen from time to time.

The essays in this volume move in different analytical directions. One of these directions—a second approach to comparison—is to outline a temporal structure of historical regimes or institutional configurations that knit together a panoply of political, economic, social, and cultural processes across time. Some of the structures considered go back much further than the 1930s: capitalism, colonialism, racism, patriarchy. Nevertheless, for most of our authors, the 1930s (or the interwar period) was a pivotal moment in the unfolding of the longue durée, as well as for the emergence of regimes and institutions, even if these expressed enduring relations and imperatives. This includes, of course, historical fascism, which, despite being essentially destroyed *as a regime* by the end of the Second World War, nevertheless left important residues behind (see, e.g., Finchelstein 2017). It also includes that form of capitalist regulation known as "Fordism" or "embedded liberalism" that emerged out of the crisis (Aglietta 2001; McDonough et al. 2010). Much of that institutional order is still with us, despite the transition to a neoliberal regime after the 1970s. There are of course other forms of periodization possible: for now, it is enough to note that many of our authors deploy a temporal structure of systemic continuities, albeit with points of inflection, transition, or mutation.

A third temporal structure that appears here is the cycle, a repeated sequence of events that occur as part of an ongoing processes: for example, "long waves" that pass from a surge of development to financial expansion and crisis (Arrighi 2010; Perez 2003; Roberts 2016; Shaikh 2016). Here, the interwar period and the contemporary moment are typically presented as homologous moments of economic stagnation and chaos. This cyclical temporal structure arguably provides some of the most provocative, far-reaching, and internally coherent explanations for

the similarities between these two periods, and is utilized to effect by several of the authors collected here. However, this approach is also sometimes prone to sliding into a rigid, overly mechanical view of history as repetition. (It is also worth noting that for the most part, this cyclical temporality has been applied to the economic processes of capital accumulation and crisis, and much less to the resurgence of illiberal nationalisms.)[2]

In the rest of this introductory chapter, we will briefly consider how comparison between the 1930s and the present often appears, and the work done by that comparison. As we have suggested, these comparisons typically take up either the economic or the political, and we will follow that general division in the following discussion, setting the stage for the more synthetic analyses carried out by the chapters that follow.

The Great Depression and the Great Recession

The Great Recession was from early on recognized as an event similar in kind to the Great Depression, most notably by the central bankers and others tasked with responding to the crisis (Eichengreen 2016; Tooze 2018). Both involved an initial recessionary movement followed by a rapidly unfolding financial crisis, which included precipitous falls in asset prices, a wave of defaults and the collapse of financial institutions. Both were global in scale, although unevenly so (even this unevenness, however, showed striking similarities, with epicenters in the United States and Europe, and more attenuated impacts on Asia, Latin America, and Africa). And both crises were characterized by dramatic declines in output and increases in unemployment, which led to a long period of stagnation or slow recovery beset by additional crises. This sustained reduction of world output suggests that the "Great Recession" was really the first global depression of the twenty-first century, even if it was not as deep as the Great Depression of the 1930s (see Krugman 2013; Roberts 2016; Shaikh 2016).

Less obviously, both crises were *preceded* by similar processes of financialization and rising inequality. The turn of the twentieth and twenty-first

[2] It should go without saying that any these temporal structures may be tweaked or synthesized in different ways as they are applied in practice. All, however, serve to put in question the explanatory power of presentist accounts of contemporary phenomena: financialization, neoliberalism, crisis, populism, authoritarianism, nativism, and so on.

centuries were both periods of financialization at a global scale—the emergence of new forms of finance, expansion of the role of finance in capitalist accumulation, increased indebtedness by firms, households, and states, and the formation of a series of speculative bubbles in housing, stocks, and other assets (see Eichengreen 2016; Fasianos et al. 2018; Lapavitsas 2013). The increase in inequality is also notable, particularly in the United States—epicenter of both crises—where measures of inequality, on a steep ascent from the 1980s, had reached levels not seen since the 1920s by the beginning of the twenty-first century (Kumhof et al. 2015; Stockhammer 2013).

Responding to the Great Recession: Historical Memory and Political Economy

At the outset, all indicators suggested that the Great Recession was on track to rival or outdo the Great Depression (Almunia et al. 2010). The financial system of the early twenty-first century was deeply integrated and dependent on short-term credit, which made it vulnerable to rapid contagion and collapse (Tooze 2018). If the Great Recession did not produce a collapse of the magnitude of the Great Depression, it was largely because of institutions and lessons inherited from the 1930s. This time, dramatic measures were taken—at great public expense—to prevent the collapse of the banking system. Money creation was no longer bound by the "golden thread" that hampered central banks at the beginning of the 1930s (Eichengreen 2016; Polanyi 2001), although the Euro played a similarly pernicious role of blocking effective monetary response to national conditions. In some places, social safety nets established after the 1930s also provided "automatic stabilizers" to sustain demand and livelihoods, although ultimately, the tendency was to undermine these institutions (through austerity regimes) rather than to bolster them.

In short, the lessons learned from the 1930s and applied to the first depression of the twenty-first century ended up being deeply one-sided. While the banks were rescued and interest rates cut, public investment and direct contributions to workers' livelihoods were sidelined. Stimulus spending was weak and limited to only a few years and a few cases (the United States, China, and some others). Most glaringly, banks were bailed out at enormous public expense, while little or nothing was done for indebted households. The most affected Eurozone countries were saddled with debts from the bank bailout and, unable to employ monetary policy,

were forced to endure years of austerity and "internal devaluation" (above all, wage decreases).[3]

While the example of the Great Depression certainly informed responses to the crisis, organized class interests articulated within a geography of uneven development were decisive. A heavily financialized capitalist class could agree on the necessity of rescuing itself from collapse. But finance capital fears inflation, which reduces the value of debts, while capitalist interests in general feared an expansion of the welfare state, public employment, and the bargaining power of workers. These interests militated successfully against the employment of the fiscal and often even the monetary lessons of the Great Depression.

They were aided in that there was little *popular* narrative around depressions and how to deal with them. The Fordist common sense that emerged from the Great Depression—for example, that workers had to earn enough to buy the fruits of industry—had been eroded by a generation of neoliberalism and globalization. Advocates of austerity were able to appeal to a different common sense of household economics, where there is no paradox of thrift in hard times, in contrast to macroeconomic reasoning after Keynes. They also mobilized the guilt and ethics of obligation that glom onto debt—fueled by strong doses of racism and nationalism—to create compelling austerity narratives, attributing the crisis to allegedly irresponsible spendthrift nation-states (such as Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece, or Spain—the so-called PIIGS) or, for the US right, government profligacy in the service of supposedly irresponsible, financially illiterate homebuyers. The role of neoliberal policies in generating the crisis was obscured, and widespread outrage at the bankers and bailouts was deflected (see, e.g., Mylonas 2019).

[3] The lack of effective fiscal response led Keynesian and other "heterodox" economists to argue that the wrong lessons had been learned from the 1930s. Friedman and Schwarz's (1962) highly influential monetarist history, which argued that depression could have been averted by more effective monetary policy, had obscured the role of demand in causing the depression, and of wartime production in ending it. But even those monetarist lessons were largely ignored by the European Central Bank (ECB), which raised interest rates in 2011. A more expansionary monetary policy was eventually adopted, but continued to be restricted by stiff opposition, especially from the German establishment. It is often suggested that this resistance reflected historical memory of Weimar hyperinflation, but it is no doubt more important that Germany was no longer in recession and its dominant economic interests had diverged from those of its neighbors.

The lessons and institutions of the 1930s were, then, applied just enough to maintain the coherence of the financial system, and the financialized system of accumulation that had prevailed before the crisis. This brings us to a major point of difference between these two historical moments. The Great Depression led, at least momentarily, to a reduction in the financialization that preceded it. By the end of the Second World War, a distinct regime of "embedded liberalism" (or Fordist accumulation) would be established. In contrast, no such changes have yet emerged from the first depression of the twenty-first century. The very effectiveness in staving off a full financial collapse this time around has also arguably prevented a fuller reckoning with the financialized, neoliberal regime that produced it. Among other things, this raises the specter of a repeat performance.

Explaining the Recurrence of Crisis: Finance and Debt, Innovation and Inequality

Within mainstream economics, there was some serious reckoning with the limitations of the neoliberal monetarist paradigm that prevailed before the crisis, given the inability of monetary policy to stimulate investment even at zero (or negative) interest rates. This rethinking involved another look at the Great Depression, and, in particular, the role of indebtedness by households and firms in setting the stage for both crises, based in the largely neglected works of Irving Fischer and Hyman Minsky. (Notably, one of the major figures in this historical reassessment was Ben Bernanke, the chair of the US Federal Reserve, who was also responsible for the innovative response of "quantitative easing.") In this analysis, both crises were caused by processes of "debt-deflation" and deleveraging in the wake of speculative bubbles: a decrease in asset prices (or deflation) increases the burden of debts, constraining the debtors and leading to retrenchment by banks, while lending, investment, and consumption grind to a halt. Although the mechanism of the crisis is somewhat distinct, many of the conclusions are essentially Keynesian: Lower interest rates will not induce investment, so that either aggressive monetary policy (e.g., "quantitative easing") or public spending is needed to reflate asset prices and create demand (Eggertsson and Krugman 2012).

This account puts the spotlight squarely on the financial system, and the rising indebtedness of households and firms, together with the formation of speculative asset bubbles, becomes the proximate cause of

both crises. Unsustainable finance can then be understood as a kind of immanent tendency in capitalism that must be restrained by effective regulation, which is in turn always in a race with the development of new forms of finance. In the 1920s, these financial innovations included massive participation in the securities markets, novel technologies of financial transaction (including high-frequency trading), new forms of finance in real estate and construction, and innovations in consumer finance (installment buying, for example). In the 2000s, we have subprime loans, exchange-traded funds, derivatives, swaps, and more; shadow banking through private equity, hedge funds, private mutual funds, and so on; as well as the expansion of consumer credit through credit cards and the like. In both periods, there is also an absence of capital controls and a growing cross-border flow of investment funds that can destabilize national economies, especially small ones. The "return of depression of economics" (Krugman 2009) is, then, the return of unregulated finance, which has created the conditions for a series of financial crises of progressively greater scope (Fig. 1.2).

Beyond the question of effective regulation, however, Minsky saw the creation of increasingly unsustainable debts as a regular cyclical feature of capitalism, as the memory of prior collapses fades and both borrowers and

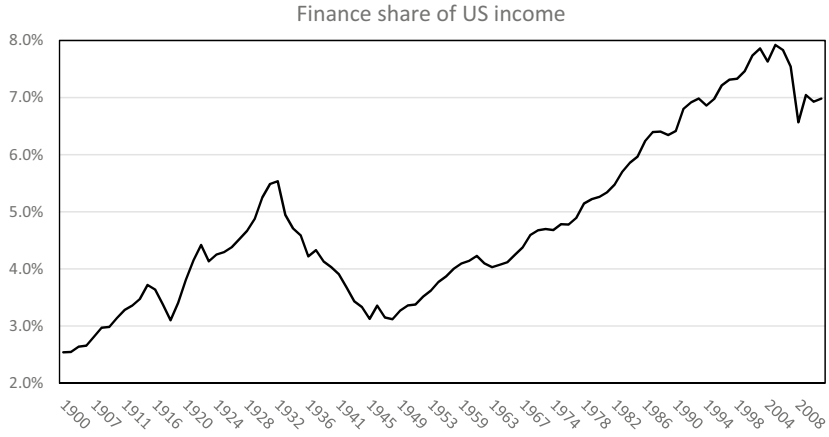


Fig. 1.2 Finance (wages and profits) as a share of national income (excluding defense) (*Source* Estimations based on Fasianos et al. [2018] and Philippon [2015])

lenders adopt increasingly irrational expectations of future growth. Palley (2011) has developed this process into a kind of meta-Minsky cycle, in which regulations on speculative finance are steadily reduced and increasingly evaded, setting the stage for larger and deeper crises over time. The discourse that monetary policy had tamed capitalism's crisis tendencies therefore becomes part of a cultural process enabling the return of crisis.

Others relate rising indebtedness to the increase in inequality that also, as it happens, preceded both crises. Some emphasize how increasing inequality led households to finance consumption by acquiring debts, both in the 1920s and in the 2000s (Kumhof et al. 2015; Tridico 2012). Others add that inequality concentrates resources in the hands of those most likely to engage in speculative investments (Wisman 2013) or discourages productive investment by reducing consumer demand (Stockhammer 2013; Wisman 2013). This latter "underconsumption" thesis was, notably, a favored explanation of observers at the time of the Great Depression. It is certainly noteworthy that both crises were preceded by extended periods in which productivity grew much faster than wages, and in which unions were increasingly repressed, especially in the United States. As was apparently the case for the 1920s, the neoliberal order that emerged in the 1980s depended on the expansion of consumer debt. In the United States, at least, consumer debt since the 1980s has sustained substantial increases in consumption, despite stagnant real wages. Investments made to cater to this inflated consumer demand were in an inherently precarious position (Kotz 2013) (Fig. 1.3).

What's more, both crises were preceded not only by an increase in debt, but also by a series of speculative bubbles in assets of all kinds, from stocks to real estate, and, in the recent period, futures, derivatives, and other more exotic assets. Both crises were thus preceded by the accumulation of large pools of wealth seeking outlets for investment, outside of the simple reinvestment in existing firms and lines of production, what Bernanke referred to in 2005 as a "global savings glut." A fundamental question that emerges here is this: Why was there so much money available to finance the growth of consumer indebtedness and investment in speculative assets? Several sources have been indicated for this "glut": The low interest rates maintained by the US Federal Reserve and other core central banks; the growth of savings in Asia; China's attempts to avoid currency appreciation; the need to hold hard currency reserves as hedges against speculative capital flows; and more. While many of these may be

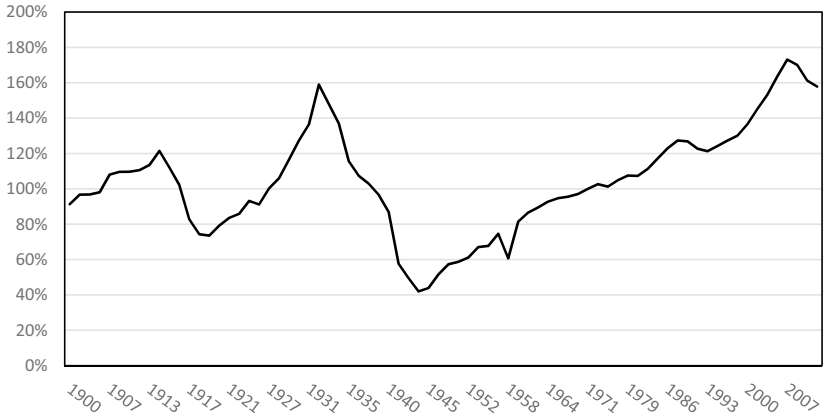


Fig. 1.3 US private sector debt as percentage of GDP, 1900–2012 (*Source* Estimation based on Fasianos et al. [2018] and Philippon [2015])

particular to the monetary and regulatory order of the late twentieth century, a comparison to conditions of the early twentieth century suggests that the accumulation of surplus capital might be a perennial or cyclical aspect of capitalism.

Writing the History of Capitalism: Waves, Cycles, and Stages

A class of thinkers, influenced in various degrees by Schumpeter and by the classical economists, from Smith to Marx, sees both crises as outcomes of longer cycles, waves, or stages in the capitalist economy. These are generally understood to be rooted in more fundamental processes of innovation, investment, and profitability, and related to broader processes of institutional, political and social or cultural change. For precisely this reason, they constitute potentially more productive, albeit more challenging, bases for interpretation of the relationship between contemporary events and those of the 1930s.

In a series of writings from the 1920s, the Russian economist Nikolai Kondratieff claimed that capitalist history was characterized by long "waves" of 50–60 years, each encompassing a period of growth and a period of stagnation, during which major recessions and depressions are

more likely. There is ongoing dispute about the degree to which the historical data conform to a convincingly regular wave pattern (see, e.g., Korotayev et al. 2010; Bernard et al. 2014). Insofar as it does, it raises the intriguing question of how such a complex, protean, and unbounded process as capitalist accumulation produces a regular periodicity: explanations usually center on the dynamics of accumulation itself, although other temporalities, such as lifespan or memory may also play a role. While it is certainly suggestive that there have been depressions or major recessions at more or less regular intervals: the 1870s, 1930s, 1970s, and 2010s, many of the more interesting thinkers in this tradition largely leave aside the question of the amplitude of "waves" to emphasize the common processes and sequences of events between cycles, as well as the qualitative changes introduced by each (Fig. 1.4).

One basic feature of all wave theories is that capitalist accumulation is discontinuous and to some degree self-limiting by nature: the very dynamics of expansion lead to a subsequent period of decline, usually rooted in a declining rate of profit. Perez (2003) and Arrighi (2010), for example, argue for a conceptualization in terms of s-shaped curves rather than waves; "great surges of development" (Perez 2003) followed by a period of stagnation. In these and most other recent accounts, this second moment, the low part of the wave or the flat top of the s-curve, is also understood to produce a process of financialization, as capital

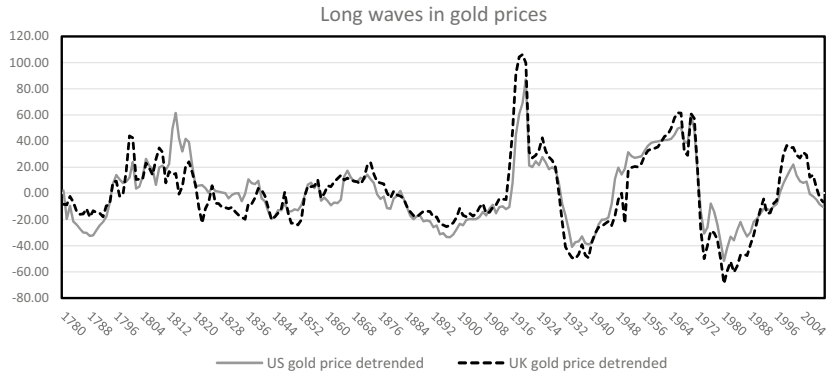


Fig. 1.4 Long waves as fluctuations in gold prices (1780–2010), with trend line removed (*Source* Data and analysis from Shaikh [2016, 726–728, database at http://realecon.org/data/])

withdraws from production (where profits are declining) to pursue profits through some combination of financial mediation, speculation, and debt-extraction. One analytical strength of these perspectives is that they provide explanations for the recurring phenomena of financialization and crises in capitalism.

The more specific accounts of cycles of accumulation vary according to the analyst's understanding of how capitalist accumulation works and why it is that profits tend to decrease following a wave of development. Some "orthodox" Marxists point to a "rising organic composition of capital," or a declining proportion of living labor in production (e.g., Roberts 2016), while Anwar Shaikh (2016) presents a sophisticated alternative based in "real competition." A simpler argument is that profits are higher in new branches of commerce or industry and are subsequently reduced as more competitors enter existing lines of production. This argument, originally advanced by Adam Smith, is important to the Schumpeterian tradition as well as various Marxian schools (Arrighi 2010, 228; e.g., Brenner 2006). In these accounts, technological or organizational innovations have an important role opening up new lines of development.

Carlota Perez (2003) has proposed a Schumpeterian theory of cycles created by the interaction between technological inventions, finance capital, and the transformation of economic institutions, which is employed in Rayner's chapter in this volume. In brief, major new technologies provide the basis for a "surge of development," but this potential can only be realized through widespread changes in business organization, finance, regulation, and the creation of new infrastructures, which together make up a "techno-economic paradigm." The creation of a new techno-economic paradigm is a disruptive process that passes through "eruption," financial speculation, dislocation of existing industries, uncertainty and crisis, against the backdrop of exhaustion of opportunities for investment in the industries of the prior wave.

The Great Depression and the Great Recession are therefore understood in terms of the emergence of two techno-economic paradigms: mass production and the automobile, after 1900, and information and communications technologies (ICTs), after 1971. The financialization that preceded both the Great Depression and the Great Recession was, then, an analogous stage of "frenzy," as finance speculated on the potential of these new technologies—a thesis which does help to make sense of the irrational exuberance of investors leading up to the "Minksy moments" of

the 1920s and 2000s. The crises that follow the frenzy express the inability of the existing system to assimilate these new technologies, but are also "turning points" that clear the way for the consolidation of the emergent techno-economic paradigm; in the case of the Great Depression, the mass production and automobilization that sustained the postwar boom. The Great Recession, Perez suggests, should be another such turning point, that would make way for the full exploitation of the potential of ICTs. By her own account, however, this development would seem to require significant institutional changes and infrastructural investments, a kind of global Green New Deal (see, e.g., 2013).

For Giovanni Arrighi (2010), the "systemic cycles of accumulation" are more profoundly political processes, intimately linked to the rise and fall of hegemonic world powers. For Arrighi, "financial expansions" also occur as a result of the exhaustion of possibilities for profitable investment in existing lines of production, but they are fundamentally characterized by the exploitation of rivalries between states—rivalries driven by the same intensification of competition that caused capital to flee production in the first place—through the cultivation of public debts and military spending. Financialization is therefore closely linked to "systemic chaos," characterized by conflict between capitalist states, financial expansion and speculation, stagnation and crises. Out of crisis and war, a new hegemonic power eventually emerges to organize a new systemic cycle of accumulation, based on the employment of new forms of organization of finance and production. Rayner, Buscema, and Jung each employ this paradigm in their respective chapters.

In this reading, the Great Depression and Second World War were the culmination of the financial expansion and systemic chaos that began in the 1870s, along with a long decline of British hegemony in business and politics. Postwar US hegemony, based around the multinational corporation, entered into its own phase of decline at the end of the 1960s, marked by the return of financial expansion and "systemic chaos." (Note that for Arrighi, the cycles are especially long—"centuries"—and the periods of financial expansion are longer than material expansions.) The Great Recession and the rise of the Chinese capital-state nexus mark the decadence of US hegemony, although Arrighi was skeptical that another cycle could emerge on this same pattern, and consequently that capitalism would long endure (Table 1.1).

Other understandings of cycles begin from the broader political and institutional or cultural matrix in which capitalist accumulation occurs,

Table 1.1 The Great Depression and the Great Recession in three cyclical theories

	Kondratieff waves; "standard" version	*Perez's great surges of development*	*Arrighi's systemic cycles of accumulation (SCA)*
1910–1929	Downswing	Maturity of steel and heavy engineering; irruption and frenzy of mass production	Financial expansion and systemic chaos (beginning 1870)
1930s	Trough	Transition from heavy engineering to mass production paradigm	Terminal crisis of British-led SCA
1945–1970	Upswing	Synergy (expansion) of mass production	Material expansion of US SCA
1970–2007	Downswing	Maturity of mass production; irruption and frenzy of ICT	Financial expansion and systemic chaos
2008–	Trough	Transition to full development of ICT?	Terminal crisis of US SCA?

rather than locating cycles in dynamics internal to the accumulation process. Karl Polanyi (2001) famously argued that capitalism was driven by a contradictory "double movement": on the one hand, a push to treat everything as a commodity, and on the other, a counter-movement to protect "society" from the crises which inevitably follows commodification of land, labor, and money. Polanyi considered the crisis of the 1930s in these terms, as a global movement toward social protection in response to the crisis provoked by excessive commodification (even if it often came in the "suicidal" form of fascism). The neoliberal era, which he did not live to see, has often been understood as a move back to dis-embedding of markets, which was, predictably from this point of view, followed by crisis. Although a counter-movement to re-embed the market is at best incipient, contemporary "populist" movements can be interpreted in this framework, as Polanyi interpreted fascism in his day (see below). There would also seem to be potential for a synthesis between this Polanyian cyclical account and the meta-Minksy cycle proposed by Palley: put simply, there is a tendency toward collective forgetting of the dangers of liberalization, abetting the drive toward dis-embedding.

Polanyi's argument shares much in common with the subsequent "regulation" and "socialstructure of accumulation" schools (e.g., Aglietta

2001; McDonough et al. 2010), which also present theories of capitalist crises and transitions that do not depend on a single mechanism *internal* to the accumulation process: Rather, capitalism is understood to be characterized by multiple contradictions whose relative weight changes over time (see also Harvey 2007, 2014), and which are only partially and temporarily resolved by a given institutional and regulatory order. For these theories, too, crises play a central role, by demanding the creation of new institutional orders: crises in the 1930s and the 1970s led to the creation of Fordism and neoliberalism, respectively, and many expected the crisis of the 2010s to have a similar transformative impact, although again, it is not clear that it has. While these theories are appealingly open to transformation and contingency, they may be less equipped to deal with the regular features, sequences (or even periodicity) of capitalist crises.

Looking Ahead: Another Surge on the Horizon?

Albeit in distinct ways, most cyclical theories suggest that the Great Depression somehow set the stage for the postwar "golden age" of capitalism. The intriguing—albeit still unanswerable—question that follows is if the Great Recession will also lead to a "great surge of development." While cyclical theories often seem to imply that development follows depression as a matter of course, the repetition of past sequences cannot be assumed. More convincingly, they may indicate the necessary conditions for a new round of sustained accumulation—and in that respect, most of the analyses presented here suggest that conditions for a new surge of development have *not* been met. If massive devaluation is necessary to clear out the overhang of underperforming investments, as some Marxian and Schumpeterian theories suggest, then the relative effectiveness of interventions to limit the crisis may have prevented a needed renewal. There are also few signs of the kinds of widespread institutional changes and infrastructural investments that would auger a new regime of accumulation or techno-economic paradigm: we are still limping along on the back of a zombie neoliberalism.

The conclusions offered by cyclical theories of capitalism may therefore coincide with noncyclical arguments for "secular stagnation." Interestingly, secular stagnation theories were widespread in the 1930s, and their renewed popularity today—including among solidly mainstream economists such as Larry Summers and Robert Gordon—is another point

of historical convergence, although many fewer today consider that a future of stagnation means the end of capitalism.

The reasons provided for secular stagnation are diverse. There are technological arguments: in comparison with the automobile, suburbanization, and mass production industries of the capitalist golden age, the current technological mix does not seem to provide as many opportunities for complementary investments in an expansive frontier of consumer goods, nor does it promise an expansion of mass employment that would help to guarantee dynamic demand: in fact, there are fears that it will displace more jobs than it creates (see, e.g., Frey and Osborne 2017).

Others point to slowing population growth and aging populations (Gordon 2016); monopoly capital and its surplus disposable problem (Baran and Sweezy 1966; Foster and McChesney 2017), a secular (rather than cyclical) trend toward a rising organic composition of capital, or simply the ever-increasing difficulty of maintaining infinite compound growth (Harvey 2014). Piketty (2014) argues that it was the postwar period that was exceptional (partly because of the massive destruction of wealth between 1914 and 1945); the historical standard is much slower growth and a tendency toward the concentration of wealth.

Finally, of course, there are the manifest ecological and planetary limits, which, if they have not already contributed to stagnation, must at some point (soon) place limits on continued accumulation (Jackson 2019; Moore 2015). Profit demands consumption, and yet the limits of extractivism demand not increased consumption to amp growth, but less to sustain the planet.

Empirically, there are many signs of stagnation and few signs of the resumption of a strong growth trajectory. Despite a general "recovery" from the Great Recession, global growth rates, and especially those of the core capitalist economies, continue a declining trend that began in the 1970s. There are also many signs that the fundamental conditions that led to the crisis of 2008 remain unaddressed; accumulated capital hesitant to invest in production, high levels of indebtedness and inequality. Perhaps most importantly, signs of overaccumulation have increasingly appeared in China, whose growth had maintained global demand through the recession. This all suggests that we might be in for a resumption of crisis conditions and a long period of depression, with its associated social, political, and cultural consequences. However those are understood, it is undeniable that capitalism is a system that depends on growth, as a motive

for continued investment and as a basis for its legitimacy as a progressive social order.

The Rise of "Populism" and Authoritarian Nationalism

The emergence of right-wing nativist authoritarian "populism" is the second major inspiration for comparisons to the interwar period. The 1920s and 1930s saw a shift from liberal democracy to authoritarian regimes; many of them characterized by violent racist and nationalist politics. Although contemporary movements have not reached the extremes of the interwar, the 2010s has also seen the erosion of liberal democracy , in many cases accompanied by an intensification of national chauvinism and racism in rhetoric and policy. While organized paramilitaries of Blackshirts and Brownshirts have yet to appear, there has been a documented increase in racist violence in the United States and Europe (Levin and Nakashima 2019).

Much of the literature comparing these two periods looks to the rise of historical fascism, often among other kinds of authoritarian episodes, in order to derive more general lessons for "how democracies die" (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018), and, accordingly, how to shore up liberal democracy in the present. A parallel and more complex discussion of "populism" also often invokes the experiences of the interwar period in order to understand contemporary political phenomena, again generally from the perspective of safeguarding liberal democracy. Both analytical moves depend on a significant degree of homology between contemporary illiberal movements and those of the 1930s, that is that (some of) what is called "populism" today shares similarities with what was called fascism then. There are a variety of views, of course, on what it is they may have in common and to what degree. Certainly, there is enough common ground between the discourse of contemporary nationalist right-wing movements and those of the 1930s to make the comparison tractable, although there is a general agreement that fascism is distinguished by its much greater commitment to the celebration of militarism and violence and more total abnegation of liberal democracy (see, e.g., Finchelstein 2017), as well as variants of "corporatist" ideology. Less often appreciated is that fascism was also much more highly organized than contemporary "populisms," reflecting its emergence in a densely organized interwar Europe (Riley 2019).

Politics and Economy in the Emergence of Right-Wing Authoritarianism

In much of this analysis, there is an emphasis on identifying how fascism or populism "work," that is, as distinct kinds of political practices or techniques, which are contrasted with a normative liberal democracy. This technique is usually identified as the cultivation of a polarizing "us-versus-them" discourse, together with a disdain for legitimate opposition and of virtues of "tolerance and forbearance" (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018; Stanley 2018). The global trend toward authoritarian populism is often represented by liberal critics as a metastasizing, autonomous logic, rather than as a product of the liberal capitalist "democracies" from which they tend to emerge.

However, there is usually at least some recognition of broader social processes, which are important for accounting for why authoritarian nationalism has occurred in waves at these two moments. "Economic hardship" is often indicated as one of the conditions of public support for illiberal political movements (Eichengreen 2018; Mounk 2018; Stanley 2018), which provides the most obvious means of explaining the surge in right-wing authoritarianism in the wake of these two moments of global crisis and depression (noting that historical fascism was gestated by a much longer period of crisis—going back to the First World War at least—even if the depression encouraged its further diffusion). At the same time, however, right-wing movements have not generally had their base of support in those most directly affected by these economic dislocations; the translation from economics to politics is culturally and socially mediated, not least by racism, nationalism, and patriarchy. In particular, the "commodity fetishism" that systematically obscures the social relations of production contributes to a racialized interpretation of economic processes, so that financial crises and the scarcity of employment or public services can be attributed to Jews, migrants, African Americans, or others (see, e.g., Hochschild 2018; Postone 1980; Stanley 2018).

Some argue that new communications technologies in both periods (radio and film in the 1930s, Twitter and Facebook in the 2010s) allowed for the rise of political movements that bypassed the established "gatekeepers" of mass communication (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018; Mounk 2018); the implication of this argument, of course, is that right-wing authoritarianism is only held in check by elites committed to liberalism,

hardly a democratic thesis. To this might be added that insofar as technocratic liberalism depends on the prestige accorded to elites, especially those in charge of finance, it is vulnerable to crises that make evident the limits of their own abilities as well as their willingness to submit the state to their own interests.

This raises the question of how the rise of populist politics reflects the contradictions and limits of capitalist liberal democracy, a theme that characterizes writing in Marxian and radical democracy traditions. This critical stance toward liberal democracy and capitalism often means a more nuanced view of its alternatives; all "populisms" are not created equal, and political antagonism may be by turns necessary or inevitable.

An influential interpretation of populism in relation to broader social processes, and even the logic of democracy itself, has been advanced by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Laclau and Mouffe have argued that populism expresses real antagonisms and that it is *the* fundamental process whereby political and social change is effected in modern societies. For Laclau (2007), populism articulates the unrealized demands of diverse social actors into a common political identity. Populist movements create the conditions for this articulation by deploying "empty" or "floating" signifiers, including words such as "the people" and the persona of a leader—which the discontented then fill with their unrealized expectations. This popular identity must, furthermore, always be anchored in opposition to some external other—the oligarchy, capitalists, Jews, foreigners, etc. While it can be either progressive or pernicious, this operation is, they claim, the basis for any politically induced social transformation. These same mechanisms that articulate identity around empty signifiers and in opposition to others would then provide a common logic shared by both the interwar fascists and today's "populists" on the right and the left, many of whom were directly influenced by Laclau's writings (Anderson 2016).[4] At the same time, Laclau and Mouffe have long argued against any essential relationship between the economic and the political (2001 [1985]), which limits the ability of their theory to address the relationship between the emergence of populism and phenomena such as economic depressions.

Mouffe (2009) adds to this framework, however, an important emphasis on the affective content of politics: in particular, that any social order

[4] For Laclau, in fact, the term applies nearly every political movement that has effected change in modern times, from the Bolsheviks to the Peronists (2007).

generates antagonisms that need to be channeled. If antagonism is not taken up by the Left and channeled toward progressive aims, it will be channeled by the Right in racist, xenophobic, or patriarchal programs. Here, liberal "forebearance and tolerance" can only be maintained insofar as antagonism is transformed into a less totalizing "agonism," but conflict cannot be wished away.

This opens the important question of the affective basis of right-wing authoritarianism and responses to it. If contemporary right-wing movements have not (yet) reached the levels of glorification of violence of their interwar predecessors, the mobilization of spectacular forms of symbolic and material violence against targeted groups *is* a predominant feature of these movements, as is the apparently transgressive pleasure (*jouissance*) with which they are carried out. This joyful violence against targeted groups sets these movements apart from the staider violence of establishment postwar liberalism, which usually at least pretended to regard violence as a tool to be used with regrets in the interest of a universal humanity. This makes for a qualitative relationship with interwar fascism and its celebration of violence against minorities and dissidents, which is certainly one of the principal reasons for the popular culture of comparison of these movements. It also complicates the explanation of these movements in class terms as reactions to capitalist crisis (as Gramsci found [Adamson 1980]), just as much as it leads to a series of unresolved questions about how to combat these movements, through what combination of affective or programmatic strategies. Sharpe, in his essay for this volume, highlights the potential of internationalist love—which is a distinct starting point from Mouffe's argument for a left embrace of antagonism (see also West and Ritz 2009). Rather than opposition to a "constitutive outside" providing the grounds for unity, for Sharpe "the ability to envision what is held in common is the psychic corollary of the broad coalition." Lawler's chapter complements this argument, exploring the mobile solidarity of the hobo as an alternative to the nation-state commitments that animate much contemporary left-populist thinking.

Dylan Riley (2019) provides an alternative framework more grounded in political economy, which is in turn employed by several of our contributors, including Souvlis and Lalaki. Riley argues that fascism arose

in the context of an increasingly organized civil society, which articulated demands, especially working-class demands, that could not be satisfied by the liberal democratic order. Fascism arose therefore in a scenario of class conflict in which ostensibly democratic parliamentary politics was unable to effectively represent democratic demands. That democratic deficit also characterizes the elite-dominated liberal democracies of the neoliberal period and became especially evident as European polities in crisis encountered serious barriers to any kind of democratic politics in the directives from the EU. The major difference between the two moments for Riley is precisely the weakness of popular and civic organization in the contemporary period: the lack of a party base makes Trump more of a "Bonapartist," seeking the particular interests of his family patrimony, than a fascist. This low level of organization is also, of course, complemented by the absence of any real anti-capitalist popular organization, one of the factors that contributed to the violence of the interwar period and of interwar fascism. If authoritarian right-wing movements again serve capitalist interests, it is now in a context where capitalist rule is much less actively contested.

Gandesha (this volume) argues that the terms of class conflict have also changed, as contemporary modes of accumulation no longer depend to the same degree on the exploitation of labor in production. Political conflict in capitalism, to be sure, now centers much more on ecological questions than it did in the 1930s. Many of the contemporary right-wing authoritarian movements (notably in the United States, the Philippines, and Brazil) have featured a rollback of environmental regulations in the service of extractive industries. Another dominant issue today is the exclusion of migrants from relatively privileged regions of the global capitalist system, which often features more centrally than the class relations in production.

Barriers to migration are often portrayed as the protection of national labor markets and social welfare systems. These initiatives can be understood, in fact, as illusory forms of social protection of workers in the capitalist core, relating contemporary right-wing movements to Polanyi's diagnosis of fascism as a (suicidal) attempt to re-embed labor, land, and money in society. In this sense, right-wing and populist movements in both moments can be understood as reactions to the chaos brought on by financial expansion, the burdens of debt, increasingly precarious work and the cultivation of anxiety-ridden, risk-managing subjects (Martin 2002),

together with the evacuation of a sense of a progressive capitalist future as the system endures its either periodic or secular stagnation.

Finally, there is a clear tendency toward gender and sexual oppression in the right-wing movements of both periods, although they have sometimes also created openings for certain kinds of protagonism by women, as Peto's chapter demonstrates. The tendency toward a more oppressive gender politics may have more to do with continuities in the politics of the Right than with the historical conjuncture; as Nancy Fraser has argued, the politics of "emancipation" is a third moment that cannot be subsumed in Polanyi's double movement (2013, chap. 10). At the same time, however, as Tzanaki's chapter shows, a continuity in the policing of women's sexuality also opens up opportunities for the use of sexual politics as a tool of control in the context of economic crisis.

Debating the Appeal of Authoritarianism: The Psychological Dynamics of Right-Wing Authoritarianism

The related concepts of the "authoritarian personality" and "right wing authoritarianism" provide another explanation for the emergence, in both periods, of movements that advocate gender and sexual oppression, nativist and racist persecution, and restrictions on civil and political rights. Proponents have used extensive survey research to demonstrate that there is a population of persons with an "authoritarian" psychological profile, which combines a disposition to order, stability, and hierarchy on the one hand ("authoritarian submission" and "conventionalism"), with a particular enthusiasm for punitive measures against "others" that are understood to threaten social stability and cohesion ("authoritarian aggression"), on the other (Adorno et al. 1950). Some influential contemporary interpretations emphasize how these tendencies are "activated" by the perception of threats (rising crime, terrorism, unemployment, pandemics), or even by evidence of social changes in sexual norms, racial and gender hierarchies, or increased diversity (see, e.g., Stenner 2005). Of course, they are also enabled by the politicians that craft the messages that appeal to, encourage and authorize these impulses, both by stimulating fear and by presenting authoritarian solutions to the constructed "threats."[5]

[5] For example, it is argued that the US Republican Party began to draw authoritarians to its ranks when it positioned itself as the opponent of social change and racial and gender equality at the end of the 1960s, a tendency which continued after September

This framework provides explanations for the subjectivity of mass support for authoritarian politics, including some aspects that are otherwise difficult to account for: why seemingly unrelated causes (e.g., racism, anti-gay politics) tend to go together in right-wing movements, why the targets of right-wing politics are often fungible (see Briskey, this volume), or why these movements direct so much vicious cruelty toward relatively powerless minorities. Furthermore, the concept of "activation" might explain why we see a resurgence of such authoritarian sensibilities now as in the 30s, insofar as the "systemic chaos," rapid social changes, and political and economic uncertainties that characterized both periods (albeit in distinct degrees), could serve either as triggers for an authoritarian psychological profile, or as motivating contexts for political leaders to make authoritarian appeals, especially given the difficulty of articulating more progressive hegemonies in moments of capitalist stagnation.

The debate over the psychological origins of the authoritarian profile is beyond the scope of this essay. However, a note of caution is warranted by the emphasis on the putatively enduring psychological dispositions (such as overly strict fathers or susceptibility to disgust), rather than on critical exploration of the social, cultural, and historical production of authoritarian dispositions, and, especially, their affinities and targets (see Gordon 2018). As we know, race, ethnicity, nation, gender, and the state are social and historical constructs, whose relation to affective states must also be historically produced. A framework attentive to the social construction of these categories in the context of capitalist liberal democratic states—as well as to the internal and external contradictions of each category—would help to advance understanding of how psychological dispositions are converted into the recurring form of right-wing authoritarianism. Gandesha's chapter in this volume (as well as his ongoing work elsewhere) advances toward such an integral conception of authoritarianism.

Identifying the Limits of Liberalism: Capitalist Liberal Democracy's Internal Contradictions

Capitalist, liberal democracy seems to imply skating a series of contradictions. We are asked to defer to and honor national leaders, who are often

11th and accelerated with the Trump candidacy (Hetherington and Weiler 2009; Taub 2016).

regarded as extraordinary if not nearly superhuman in their capacities, and as who we should trust to look out for our collective interests—but only up to a point, after which we slip from normal to authoritarian obedience. We are asked to prioritize a national community, to which we owe our primary allegiance, and should even be willing to sacrifice our lives, but also to accept that we are part of a global division of labor, with free movements of goods and capital, but of people whenever and only insofar as it is authorized by the state. We are told that the people are the authors and agents of democracy, but that this is limited by constitution, convention, technical expertise, and the independence of the central bank. Authoritarianism, populism, and other illiberalisms are therefore implicit in the precarious structure of liberal democracy itself. And this is not to mention the contradictions of capitalism, or between its systemically inflated promises and its realities.

One way of framing these movements is as movements for social protection and constituent power in the context of a crisis of global capitalism. As Riley (2019) argues, historical fascism was a kind of authoritarian democracy, insofar as it promised to channel the popular will (and even sponsored means for mass participation)—it just claimed that liberalism and elections were not the means to do so. Insofar as they were "revolutionary" regimes, they appealed to the people's constituent power, the democratic right of the people to remake the foundations of its political system, which always lingers as a potential destabilizing contradiction in any constituted order that claims to run democracy according to established rules (Kalyvas 2009). Contemporary populists also appeal to constituent power, even if they are less explicitly revolutionary: they consistently challenge the institutions of liberalism as fetters on a popular will which they uniquely represent. Here, much of the responsibility for current movements rests in the limits of neoliberalism as an antipolitical formation that denied any possibility for collective agency over and against the rule of "market forces" (Brown 2015), as demonstrated in this volume's chapters by Wilkinson, on authoritarian liberalism, and Gökariksel on "militant democracy."

The appeal, however indirect, to constituent power helps to explain the temporal structure which Griffin (2008), describing "generic fascism," has characterized as palingenesis, or "the myth of rebirth": on the one hand, the evocation of constituent power is an appeal to make a new future, and on the other hand, as racist or nationalist movements, they appeal to a (usually vaguely defined) collective past to ground essentialist

identities. This temporal structure is equally evident in Mussolini's combination of futurism with the valorization of ancient heroism—common in one way or another to most European fascisms—and Trump's famous slogan, Make America Great Again. If today's populist right lacks the futurist imagination of their predecessors, then that lack might reflect the generalized inability to conceive of a future beyond capitalism, even despite the less than shining future that capitalism seems to promise now.

Seen as movements that articulate illusory versions of social protection and constituent power in the context of a crisis of global capitalism, the rise of right-wing authoritarianism can be seen less as an external threat to liberal capitalist democracy than as the expression of its unresolved contradictions. Something of the same could be said for the contradictions between the national state and the globalizing and universalizing drive of capitalism and liberalism. The extreme violence of the interwar had everything to do with war, which has itself often been explained as a result of intensified competition between national states for territory, resources, and markets, in a world divided into increasingly closed territorial systems which excluded the newly industrializing, and territorially poor, states such as Germany, Japan, and Italy. Arrighi (2010) in turn attributes this competition between national states to the increasingly zero-sum competition between capitals in existing lines of production and the consequentially increased availability of surplus capital for investment in war-making. While, again, the contemporary period does not demonstrate the same *degree* of confrontation between capitalist states, there have clearly been movements in this direction, including the "new imperialism" initiated by the younger Bush administration (Harvey 2003), and, more recently, the specter of a "trade war" between the United States and China. And again, this increase in intercapitalist rivalry seems to follow an extended period of overaccumulation and saturation of investment opportunities in existing lines of production; notably, China has ceased to be only an assembly platform for foreign transnationals and has developed its own firms competing in established industries (autos) as well as on the technological frontier (solar energy, 5G, artificial intelligence). What's more, this more aggressive assertion of "national interests" in commerce has gone hand in hand with a more general assertion of nationalist nativism, including the exclusion and persecution of migrants and the targeting of Muslim minorities as an internal enemy: which confirms the relevance of Arendt's (1951) argument that fascism represented imperialism "brought home" (an argument developed by Buscema and Taek-Gwang Lee, in this volume).

While it may have seemed at the end of the twentieth century (as at the end of nineteenth) that a liberal, globalizing capitalism was transcending nationalism, it has become increasingly clear that the nation-state remained the seat of popular identification and legitimate political authority, capable of being remobilized. Although it is certainly likely that the force of any return to nationalist imperialism will be blunted by the economic integration and cosmopolitanism promoted (in part) by the globalization of liberal capitalism—as well as by the unimaginable destruction that would be brought by warfare between major capitalist states today—the contradictory foundation of liberalism in the national state means that ugly, racist, and xenophobic illiberalism will continue to plague the liberal capitalist project.

The Organization of the Book

In Part I of this volume, "Crises of Capital and Hegemonic Transitions," contributors examine one of the most common comparisons drawn between the 1930s and the present in both popular and academic discourse: the financial crises and economic downturns that characterized both eras. These authors ask whether and to what extent these parallels reflect a capitalism in crisis—whether that crisis is figured as financial collapse, secular stagnation, or systemic transition—and how might we hone or enrich those understandings in and through comparison with the 1930s. Drawing on the work of Adorno, Arendt, Arrighi, Benjamin, Césaire, Gramsci, and Polanyi, among others, these chapters push us to rewrite the narrative of economic transition: three middle chapters take the standpoint of national and regional frames outside the North Atlantic—Latin America (Rayner), Greece (Souvlis and Lalaki), Hungary (Pogátsa)—and they are bookended by theoretically expansive arguments (Gandesha, Buscema) about capitalist accumulation and the temporality of transition. Together, these chapters provide a series of perspectives on the organization of capitalism and the juxtaposition of cyclical repetition and secular transformation.

In Part II, "Authoritarianism, Populism, and the Limits of Liberal Democracy," contributors pick at a different seam in the stitching often used to tie together the 1930s and the present, a thread that winds through both eras to connect liberalism and democracy to the rise of ostensibly illiberal, often explicitly nationalist or nativist, populism, and authoritarianism. These chapters do not assume that liberalism is a

natural, ideal, or even historically uniform political order—the telos of political evolution—in comparison with which other forms of politics can only appear as aberrations. Instead, they assume a critical stance to liberalism and its relationship, empirical and ideological, to capitalism and democracy. Indeed, they seek to reveal the authoritarianism *inside* of liberalism, the ways that the state is mobilized in defense and in support of economic liberalism, while constraining and repressing democratic forces from below. At the same time, these chapters maintain an equally critical focus on the populist, nationalist/nativist, and authoritarian movements that have emerged throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as liberalism's loudest challengers—asking, for example, how the "people" are imagined in different moments and by different forms of left- and right-populism, and what kinds of solidarities—of race and class, grievance and resentment, power and privilege—they rely upon. A range of regional and national cases—on Western Europe (Wilkinson), Turkey (Burc and Tokatli), Hungary (Taylor), Brazil (Fogel), and Eastern Europe (Gökariksel)—is anchored by a shared orientation to the contradictions within liberal capitalism.

In Part III, "People in Movement: Practices, Subjects and Narratives of Political Mobilization," contributors focus on the work of protest and political mobilization in the 1930s and today. Drawing on cases from both "right" and "left" movements in both periods, these chapters explore how political subjectivities are formed, and how people are moved to action, whether in revanchist governance or in popular struggle. Together, they reveal how movements are linked together, often transnationally, by their aims (e.g., antisystemic struggles against exclusion and exploitation) and by cultural resources and affective identification. The opening chapter (Jung) mobilizes the news to map a global landscape of protest movements; the four chapters that follow—on radical poets on the global scene (Sharpe) and radical countercultural left writers in the United States (Lawler), Hungarian Far Right women's movements (Peto) and Italian post- and neofascists (Broder)—dig into the affective, often literary motivations and manifestations of bodies politic-in-formation. The latter two chapters describe how neofascism and authoritarianism can appropriate modes of representation from the Left, even claiming as their own the struggle to defend workers, women, the socially marginalized, and economically downtrodden—those who feel they have *lost* something. In the process, they adopt a cultural politics (indeed, an "identity" politics) of

their own. Meanwhile, the former two chapters also consider the possibilities for the creation of new solidarities in the face of violent and exclusionary authoritarianisms, that might prove capable of interrupting the legitimization of white nationalism and autocracy.

In Part IV, "Body Politics/Political Bodies: Race, Gender, and the Human," contributors consider discourses and practices that govern the body in relation to political economy. The rise of racist and ethnonationalist biopolitics is among the most prominent features of both periods. (Indeed, as Taek-Gwang Lee argues in his contribution, fascism *is* "colonial biopolitics.") Turning to the person, the family, and the nation, our authors ask how parallels between the 1930s and today make visible and/or obscure a longue durée of racial capitalism and state violence, limning the borders of personhood and delimiting the boundaries of citizenship—and in the process, redrawing the lines of social and political conflict. Two chapters address the rise of racism and ethnonationalism using cases from Asia (Taek-Gwang Lee) and Australia (Briskey), while a third chapter examines the regulation of sexuality in Greece (Tzanaki). The last reading reflects on the present by way of history, while also looking to the future by exploring imaginaries of the human provoked by new technologies and regimes of production (Falls). Across these chapters, contributors are attentive to persistent logics of racialized extraction, exploitation, and disenfranchisement, even as they ferret out their novel forms and effects. In this, they remind us that capitalism necessarily rests on non-capitalist foundations, is constituted and sustained through noncapitalist, even nonmarket practices: domestic work, imperialism, feudalism, slavery.

Each chapter in the book has been paired with an image; these images were not necessarily chosen as literal illustrations, but offered as provocations to help us to think about the content of each chapter, to meditate on presentations of history and crisis, to scrutinize counterhegemonic initiatives, and to encourage readers to place each work into conversation with other materials in the collection and elsewhere. Taken together, these chapters take the 1930s and 2010s as mirrors that reflect one another, as lenses through which to inspect one another, and as archives from which to pull object lessons. When we turn, or return, to the 1930s, we do so not simply to confirm emergent common sense, but to reframe, reshape, and re-engage contemporary struggles.

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PART I

Crises of Capital and Hegemonic Transitions



Fig. 2.1 Gitumten Checkpoint, Unceded Wet'suwet'en Territories, Turtle Island (B.C., Canada) Jan 7, 2020. Photo: Michael Toledano

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CHAPTER 2

The Spectre of the 1930s

Samir Gandesha

Over the past three decades, we have witnessed the rise of right-wing populist parties throughout Europe such as Haider's Freedom Party in Austria, Victor Orbán's Fidesz Party in Hungary, and the Polish Law and Justice Party. In one of the most disturbing developments, a long-standing taboo in Germany was recently broken with the neo-Nazi Alternative für Deutschland having just joined a coalition government with an FDP premier in the state of Thuringia. Such a development hasn't been

This chapter was originally presented at Historical Materialism London, 2018, at Johan Hartle's Seminar at the Hochschule für Gestaltung, and King's College London. The author wishes to thank the participants in these settings for their comments and challenging questions including Joseph Baines, Susan Falls, Johan Hartle, Andreas Malme, Jaleh Mansoor, Julia Nichols, Jeremy Rayner and Ingo Schmidt. A revised version of it serves as the Introduction to *Spectres of Fascism: Historical, Theoretical and Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Samir Gandesha (London: Pluto Press, 2020)

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_2

confined to Europe but is a global phenomenon, as evinced, for example, by the electoral triumphs of Narendra Modi in India in 2014 and of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey as early as 2003. There is also, of course, the stunning victory of Donald J. Trump in the November 2016 American presidential election and the triumph of the Leave campaign (from the European Union) led by the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in June of the same year.

But perhaps the most alarming example of this tendency is the recent election of former paratrooper, Jair Bolsonaro, on the basis of 55% of the popular vote as the president of Brazil. The misogynistic, homophobic and racist Brazilian president has expressed admiration for the torturous methods of the Junta that ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1985—with the qualifier that it wasn't quite ruthless enough—has threatened the independence of the Brazilian Supreme Court, and has openly declared war on the Brazilian Left. Recalling Mussolini's similar remarks about Antonio Gramsci, Bolsonaro has pledged that Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (known simply as "Lula"), the popular former president and leader of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), would "rot in prison." Bolsonaro has been successful in convincing many Brazilians that a PT victory would have been worse than a return to the worst days of the military dictatorship. If Pinochet's 1973 coup in Chile inaugurates the first phase of neoliberalism, then Bolsonaro's can be seen to inaugurate its second, more ruthlessly genocidal phase (Safatle 2018). This claustrophobic, paranoid style of politics is strongly reminiscent of the 1930s.

It would seem, then, that the present historical conjuncture is haunted by the specter of the 1930s, which is to say by the specter of fascism. How is it possible to understand the return of a specter that was thought to have been decisively exorcized in the last century? One obvious way is to suggest that out-of-joint times produce uncanny *repetitions*. What we see today is the repetition of the so-called moment of Weimar, that is, the return of *zombie democracy* squeezed, morbidly, between what Gramsci described as "the old world [that] is dying and the new world [that] struggles to be born." Holocaust historian, Christopher W. Browning, argues that one witnesses several *continuities* and one significant *discontinuity* between events in the contemporary US and the Weimar period in Germany. Then, as now, the US is becoming increasingly isolationist. Then, as now, we see an undermining of the institutions of liberal democracy; the part of Paul von Hindenburg, today, is played by Mitch

McConnell. "Like Hitler's conservative allies," Browning argues, "McConnell and the Republicans have prided themselves on the early returns in their investment in Trump" (Browning 2018). A key *discontinuity*, according to Browning, between Weimar and our current conjuncture, however, has to do with the fact that it is not likely that we will witness the rise of an organized, disciplined mass-based fascist movement. He foresees, rather, an incremental and subtler "suffocation of democracy," that is, the rise of what he calls "illiberal democracy" insofar as authoritarian leaders and movements typically make exclusionary-populist appeals to the "demos" or the "people" on the basis of which they seek to subvert the rule of law and constitutionality, yet still participate in elections.

In the main, Browning's analysis is cogent, particularly in the argument concerning "illiberal democracy."[1] And if we look at the rise of other authoritarian regimes across the globe (from the US to Poland and Hungary), we can clearly see the undermining of checks and balances provided by the judiciary, the free press as well as political dissent on the executive branch of the state. Democracy is threatened, then, not from without but from within (Adorno 2005, 89–104).

What remains, perhaps unsurprisingly, absent in Browning's liberal account, is an explanation of the social conditions that led to the rise of fascism in the 1930s and how those conditions might be paralleled by those we are witnessing today. Any convincing account of the specter of the 1930s must link it not only to a determinate *political crisis* of democratic institutions but also to the distinctive *socioeconomic crisis*, and not just to the crisis of the 1930s but also to the infamous German inflation of 1924–1925. "If you don't want to talk about capitalism," as Max Horkheimer famously put it approximately eighty years ago, "then you'd better keep quiet about fascism" (1939).

So, to come to terms with the return of fascism in the twenty-first century it is important to take as one's point of departure the socio-economic crisis of the capitalist order. As Samir Amin (2014) has argued, "Fascism is a particular political response to the challenges with which the management of capitalist society may be confronted in specific circumstances." Amin goes on to suggest that it is comprised of two features. The first is that, underlying several of its direct diatribes against "capitalism" or

[1] It is an analysis confirmed by Richard J. Evans, who notes the enabling role of the courts in the rise of National Socialism (Evans 2015, 87–117). Here, the contemporary parallels with the recent "judicial coup" in Brazil are uncanny (Anderson 2019).

"plutocracies," fascism represents a response to capitalist crises. And, in a much stronger formulation of Browning's thesis of the rise of "illiberal democracy," Amin argues that the second feature of fascism is that this particular response implies a "*categorical* rejection of democracy" (emphasis added). Amin (2014) argues:

> Fascism always replaces the general principles on which the theories and practices of modern democracies are based—recognition of a diversity of opinions, recourse to electoral procedures to determine a majority, guaranty of the rights of the minority, etc.—with the opposed values of the submission to the requirements of collective discipline and the authority of the supreme leader and his main agents.

Amin's definition of fascism constitutes an important framework within which to situate the truly *global* (rather than merely European/Japanese) re-emergence of fascism today. Yet the definition ought to be modified to reflect that contemporary fascism takes aim not at democracy per se but specifically at *liberal democracy*, insofar as it purports to embody the "general will" of the people or *demos*.

To summarize the discussion so far: fascism is a militantly antidemocratic way of addressing the crisis of capitalist social relations. Collective identities and cultural traditions are mobilized in such a way as to confront and indeed undermine formal democratic institutions and the rule of law. The precise manner, however, in which these are defined will depend on the diachronic or historical circumstances of a given society as well as its synchronic, which is to say, structural location within global capitalism as a whole. Amin's framework is particularly helpful insofar as what we confront today, as alluded to above, is a truly globalized rise of the specter of fascism from the US and parts of Latin America, Brazil in particular, to Europe, Turkey, Egypt and India.

An important account of the crisis of interwar German capitalism and its role in creating the conditions for the rise of Nazism can be found in the *Economy and Class Structure of German Fascism* (1987) by Alfred Sohn-Rethel. The book is based on documents to which the author had access during his time working at the *Mitteleuropäischer Wirtschaftstag* (MWT). The MWT was a powerful lobby group which included representatives from all of the powerful German industrial firms. Sohn-Rethel shows how German industry was already pushing as early as 1931—two

years before the *Machtergreifung*—for an imperialist policy towards central Europe. It was driven to do so as a result of the contradictions following from the "irrational" process of rationalization and modernization of German industry via a dramatic acceleration of the forces of production (Sohn-Rethel 1987, 22–30). As a result of this, there was a growing contradiction between the cost of production and prices. Essentially, the relative proportion of fixed to variable capital meant that production could not be properly calibrated to fluctuations of demand within the domestic market. The accelerated development of the productive forces placed unbearable pressure on liberal-bourgeois property relations. The tendency, as Sohn-Rethel shows, was towards cartelization and monopoly based on an uneasy alliance of industrial capital and large agricultural producers (*Junkers*) against the working class and small peasant producers (*Bauern*) (Sohn-Rethel 1987, 62–66).

Influenced by figures such as Sohn-Rethel as well as by recently returned exiles Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, West German students drew connections between their present—that is, the Bundesrepublik's role in the US's neocolonial Viet Nam War—and the Nazi past. What the West German students had sensed in the period 1967–1977, recent historiography would increasingly confirm and emphasize, namely: the connection between fascism and the logic of colonization, in particular, the experience of African colonization and the colonial imaginary of the westward expansion of the US republic in the nineteenth century (Evans 2015; Dunbar-Ortiz 2015; Naranch and Eley 2014). The colonial imagination was also central to Mussolini's vision of fascism nurtured as it was on the militaristic fantasies of the Futurists. The Italian bombing of Abyssinia was central to the aesthetics of fascism—understood as an exemplary case of the "aestheticizing of politics" (Benjamin 2006, 122)—the spectacle of war, violence and domination.

The *locus classicus* for an understanding of the crisis tendencies of capitalism and their imperialistic solution is Rosa Luxemburg's *The Accumulation of Capital* (2003). Luxemburg's argument is that in order to solve the problem of the contradiction between mass production and the non-participation of the working class in consumption, capital is driven into non-capitalist regions. Capitalism, in Luxemburg's view, leads inevitably to imperialism, militarism and war.

As Ansgar Hillach and his collaborators have shown, in his "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility," Walter Benjamin

draws upon Luxemburg's argument to suggest that, "if the natural utilization of productive forces is impeded by the property system, the increase in technical devices, in speed, and in the sources of energy will press for an unnatural utilization, and this is found in war." They continue: "natural" would be "a harmonious balance" of forces in the sense of a realized "right of co-determination [of technology] in the social order" (Hillach et al. 1979, 120). In other words, absent a democratic determination of technology, its development *can only culminate in violence*. This becomes particularly important in our own period, with the increasing obsolescence of human labor power through the development of digitization, robotics and AI. What we see, in other words, is a contradictory acceleration of the tendencies that Sohn-Rethel already detected in Germany in the 1930s, yet now within the context of the neoliberal form of capitalism.

Hannah Arendt takes up Luxemburg's argument in the *Origins of Totalitarianism* to show the connection between imperialism and the rise of National Socialism. As Arendt argues:

> The imperialist concept of expansion, according to which expansion is an end in itself and not a temporary means, made its appearance in political thought when it had become obvious that one of the most important permanent functions of the nation-state would be expansion of power. The state-employed administrators of violence soon formed a new class within the nations and, although their field of activity was far away from the mother country, wielded an important influence on the body politic at home. (Arendt 1976, 137)

Enzo Traverso has developed Arendt's thesis with the help of Michel Foucault to show the manner in which fascism represents the application of colonial techniques of domination to Europe itself—a kind of endocolonialism. For Traverso, Nazism didn't represent so much of counterpoint to the West as it did a culminating synthesis of its own myriad forms of violence—a synthesis that could, in some dark future, be repeated. He argues:

> The guillotine, the abattoir, the Fordist factory, and rational administration, along with racism, eugenics, the massacres of the colonial wars and those of World War I had already fashioned the social universe and the mental landscape in which the Final Solution would be conceived and set

> in motion. All those elements combined to create the technological, ideological, and cultural premises for that Final Solution, by constructing an anthropological context in which Auschwitz became a possibility. These elements lay at the heart of Western civilization and had been deployed in the Europe of industrial capitalism, in the age of classic (sic) liberalism. (Traverso 2003, 151)

The deep underlying connection between imperialism and fascism was, of course, recognized in 1950 by Aimé Césaire in his *Discourse on Colonialism*, in which he condemns the hypocrisy of certain self-righteous forms of European antifascism:

> …before they were its victims, they were its accomplices; that they tolerated Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it has been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism, that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole edifice of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps and trickles from every crack. (Césaire 1972, 3)

If in the 1930s, the specific contradictions resulting from the accelerated development of the productive forces under the aegis of industrial capital constituted a colonizing logic, today such a logic is impelled by the evermore abstract logic of finance (see, for example, Lapavitsas 2013). This is not to say that finance had no role in the imperialism of late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as J. A. Hobson (2005) and Lenin (1969) showed. Following them, Giovanni Arrighi sees the expansion of finance as key to neocolonialism in the post-independence period within the developing world (2010). The World Bank's strategy in the 1980s and 1990s of structural adjustment played a key role in forcibly liberalizing societies in which the state played an important role in the provision of services and a modicum of wealth redistribution (see Prashad 2007).

This empire of finance also entails the politics of debt (Lazzarato 2012, 2014). But the key point here is that, like twentieth century fascism, it also entails the self-colonization of Europe. Hit particularly hard by the reverberations of the global financial crisis that originated in Wall Street (Tooze 2018), leading to a spiralling sovereign debt crisis, Greece was forced to turn to the Troika for bailout funds or risk economic collapse and possible "Grexit." The Syriza Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras called for a referendum on whether the Greek people would accept brutally harsh

conditions or not. On July 5, 2015, the answer was a resounding Oxi! or NO! (61.31–38.39%). But this was simply not acceptable to the Troika. As Merkel's Finance's Minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, put it with arrogant candour: "referendum results cannot interfere with economic policy." What this amounted to, then, was the dictatorship of finance. So, not only was Greece forced, contrary to the popular will, to accept austerity conditions, these conditions were even harsher than those first proposed. In return for successive instalments or "tranches" of bailout funds, the country was forced to comply with the monetization of valuable assets for the creation of an independent fund from which Greek banks could be recapitalized, although, as a Deutsche Bank strategist made clear, this move was less about meaningful recapitalization and more about furthering privatization. The pensionable age was pushed back to 67, and the highest VAT rate (23%) was extended to cover more goods and services. The government was also made to put into place quasi-automatic spending cuts in order to generate a budget surplus. The Troika ruled out restructuring or "hair-cuts" for investors and therefore insisted upon keeping 240 billion euros on the books. The austerity measures also included further liberalization of the labor market as well as energy and financial sectors and a shrinking of the state (*Guardian*, July 13, 2015). The "violence of financial capital" (Marazzi 2010) at least in Europe can be further witnessed in Emmanuel Macron's use of extremely heavy-handed policing tactics against the *Gilets Jaunes*, who are protesting *inter alia* austerity in the streets of Paris.

While the neoliberal state seeks to present itself as the antithesis of political extremism, such an illusion can scarcely be maintained any longer. Today, we see a kind of mirroring of White supremacist and Islamist forms of terror, on the one hand, and the terror of finance, on the other. The former often takes on the appearance of the theological negation of the worldly, while in fact it is the manifestation of the cold rationality of means and ends; finance takes on the appearance of the cold rationality of means and ends, while in fact embodying what Marx called the "theological subtleties and metaphysical niceties" of the commodity form which, as Walter Benjamin (1996b, 260) suggests, culminates not in the "reform of being but its obliteration."

Another dimension of contemporary imperialism that involves financial capital, though indirectly in the form of investments in futures markets, is the massive investment in extractivism. If we look specifically at oil, we can

discern how it led the development of the global economy, as the post-war "relationship between the American state and US oil companies … already epitomized 'globalization'" (Panitch and Gindin 2013, 103). The unity of the global market with the circulation of fossil fuels was further cemented by the linking of oil to the US dollar, and the US dollar to the global financial system (see Mitchell 2011, 30).

Such an intertwined system is, obviously, not without its weaknesses and dangers, and the current "carbon bubble" is "the result of an over-valuation of oil, coal and gas reserves held by fossil fuel companies.… [A]t least two-thirds of these reserves will have to remain underground if the world is to meet existing internationally agreed targets to avoid the threshold for 'dangerous' climate change. If the agreements hold, these reserves will be in effect unburnable and so worthless – leading to massive market losses" (Carrington 2013). Thus, the financial mechanisms of the global market are closely tied to resource extraction. This dependency of the financial system on future carbon extraction is sometimes described as "locked-in" climate change and highlights the way in which the current struggle for alternatives is as much a struggle over spaces as it is a struggle over times, that is, the contradiction between the market's inherent "short-termism" and the "long-termism" of the environmental and climate consequences of market-driven fossil fuel production.

And this brings us back to Césaire's reflection on the deep connection between imperialism and fascism. Just as surplus labor time is extracted by capital from an increasingly internationalized, racialized and precarious workforce, so, too, are resources forcibly extracted from the earth. The accelerated development of capitalism in the twenty-first century—especially in the area of fossil fuels and resource extraction—has taken this fractured metabolic process to and beyond its sustainable limit, depleting non-renewable resources at an alarming rate, damaging the environmental and social lives of communities, contributing greatly to anthropogenic climate change, and reducing biodiversity to the point at which scientists are speaking of unfolding planetary mass extinctions. Modern industrial-capitalist society, in Timothy Mitchell's words, "was made possible by the development of ways of living that used energy on a new scale …. Thanks to this new social-energetic metabolism, a majority of the population could now be concentrated together without immediate access to agricultural land" (Mitchell 2011, 12–15). This is what John Bellamy Foster and his collaborators have called, following Marx, the "global metabolic rift," which refers to the "overall break in

the human relation to nature arising from an alienated system of capital accumulation without end" (Bellamy Foster et al. 2010, 18).

Profit cannot be realized, as Marx showed, until such time as the circuit of capital is completed, which is to say, until the commodities produced by industry are consumed. Consumption, extraction, and the production of excess carbon dioxide at current levels did not simply arise to satisfy "needs" or "demand": It was and is driven by the profit motive and the unevenly developed accumulation of staggering wealth. George Monbiot (2012) refers to current practices as "pathological consumption": Referring to research Annie Leonard did for her film *The Story of Stuff*, that shows that only 1% of consumer goods remain in use six months after purchase and "manufacturing and consumption are responsible for more than half of our carbon dioxide production"; furthermore, fossil fuel production and the consumption it enables (the two form a feedback loop) contribute to escalating inequality.

Writing in the aftermath of the global student and worker uprising in 1968, Guy Debord (2008), claimed that late capitalism, in which "capital [is] accumulated to the point where it turned into a spectacle," culminated in a "Sick Planet." This, in Debord's view, entailed the mutuality of the destruction of human and natural environments. In this, he anticipates the idea of the Anthropocene—the geological age following the Holocene—referring to the 200-year period following the Industrial Revolution in which the human being, the *anthropos*, irreversibly transforms the natural environment.

The inner logic of the capitalist system of production, distribution, circulation and consumption is a nihilistic accumulation for its own sake on an ever-expanding scale. This, of course, leads to an imperative of expansion from capitalist centres to under-capitalized peripheries and what geographer David Harvey has called "accumulation by dispossession." The neoliberalization of capital has created the conditions for a resurgent neocolonization particularly vis-à-vis the Middle East since the First Gulf War (1990–1991), but also has deepened settler colonialism in Canada, the US, Australia and so on (Fig. 2.1).

Extractive states place unbearable pressure on the extant fault lines of formal democratic institutions and processes. As Mitchell notes, "countries that depend upon petroleum resources for a large part of their earnings from exports tend to be less democratic"; indeed, "existing forms of democratic government appear incapable of taking the precautions needed to protect the long-term future of the planet" because "economic

calculation" occupies "the space of democratic debate" (Mitchell 2011, 1, 11).

While Amin (2014) draws attention to the explicitly antidemocratic "values of the submission to the requirements of collective discipline and the authority of the supreme leader and his main agents," he fails to provide an account of how this is possible. Fascism, as Walter Benjamin argued in his influential essay on "the work of art in the age of technological reproducibility", permitted the masses aesthetic *expression*, without altering property relations (2006, 121). As his Frankfurt colleagues would show (see, for example, Adorno 1982; Neumann 2017), this expression also had a profoundly social-psychological component: The insecurity generated by fear, anxiety and frustration of the masses in a period of economic turbulence was actively and consciously de-sublimated by fascist movements and turned against the very weakest and most vulnerable members of society. Today, these are racialized others, Muslims, LGBTQ+ communities and the Indigenous peoples.

As I have discussed elsewhere (Gandesha 2018), Theodor W. Adorno argues that the authoritarian mobilization against democracy emerges from within its interstices and is facilitated by the formation of ever more passive, compliant subjects via the structures of liberal democracy under the aegis of a neoliberal form of capitalism.[2] The latter sharpens the contradiction between the democratic principle of equality, on the one hand, and the (negative) conception of freedom that underwrites the processes of deregulation, accumulation by dispossession, and privatization, and leads inevitably to the upward redistribution of wealth. The citizen or *homo politicus* becomes eclipsed by *homo economicus*, now understood as an "entrepreneur" of herself (Brown 2017). The latter is forced to take more responsibility for her fate yet, at the same time, has fewer resources with which to meaningfully do so. As a result, individuals fall ever more short of what psychoanalysts call their "ego ideals", or the selves they strive to become, leading in turn to a proliferation of guilt, anxiety, frustration, and anger, which are then mobilized by the Far Right into fear of a given "enemy."

The contradiction between the promise of autonomy in the "political" realm, or formal structures of representative democracy as the citizen of a

[2] See Samir Gandesha, ed., *Spectres of Fascism: Historical, Theoretical and International Perspectives* (forthcoming: Pluto Press).

nation-state, and the actuality of increasing heteronomy within the "economic" realm becomes ever more unbearable. As Adorno states in "The Meaning of Working Through the Past":

> Fascism essentially cannot be derived from subjective dispositions. The economic order, and to a great extent also the economic organization modeled upon it, now as then renders the majority of people dependent upon conditions beyond their control and thus maintains them in a state of political immaturity.

He goes on to argue that:

> If they want to live, then no other avenue remains but to adapt, submit themselves to the given conditions; they must negate precisely that autonomous subjectivity to which the idea of democracy appeals; they can preserve themselves only if they renounce their self…The necessity of such adaptation, of identification with the given, the status quo, with power as such, creates the potential for totalitarianism. (Adorno 2005, 98–99)

The idealization and identification with the aggressor can be regarded as a (false) solution to this contradiction.

As is becoming ever clearer today, fascism de-sublimates the death drive. A global order, dominated by the evermore abstract and accelerated operations of finance capital leading to evermore pronounced forms of anxiety and insecurity, produces an "ontological need" (Adorno 2007, 61–96), a need for a connection to concrete, *authentic* Being. This need is supposedly met in the form of homogenous collective identities. But these entities are many forms of false concretion whose political nature is deeply ambivalent at best, which Moishe Postone (2015) calls a "fetishized form of anti-capitalism," taking the form of a personalization of the abstract in the form of the enemy: "That is, the sense of the loss of control that people have over their lives (which is real), becomes attributed, not to the abstract structures of capital, which are very difficult to apprehend, but to a Jewish conspiracy." And what can be detected here in this conspiracy is a fear and hatred of *the alien other* as such, rather than the fear of a particular other.

In contrast, however, to Mussolini's attempt to build a "New Rome" or Hitler's 1000-year Reich, which, above all, centred on a distinctive temporal politics, a politics geared to the *future*, today the "specter of fascism" responds to the ecological limits of capitalism within which the

future—within existing property relations—simply becomes unimaginable. As Benjamin (1996a, 455) had already acutely observed in his "Tour of the German Inflation":

> If society has so degenerated through necessity and greed that it can now receive the gifts of nature only rapaciously–that it snatches the fruit unripe from the trees in order to sell it most profitably, and is compelled to empty each dish in its determination to have enough–the earth will be impoverished and the land will yield bad harvests.

The spectre of the 1930s returns (see Adorno 2019), then, as a response to this particular ecological crisis of capitalism. If twentieth-century fascism, in part, offered a solution to the economic slump in the form of an authoritarian state able to foster super-exploitation—an acceleration of surplus-value extraction—by bringing independent trade unions and other working-class institutions to heel, today fascism centers on a deepening of resource extraction on the very precipice of massive deskilling of labor and widespread automation and employment of AI technology. This entails what Achille Mbembe calls the "becoming Black of the world," the creation of "abandoned subjects," including the increasing disposability of labor itself:

> There are no more workers as such. There are only laboring nomads. If yesterday's drama of the subject was exploitation by capital, the tragedy of the multitude today is that they are unable to be exploited at all. They are abandoned subjects, relegated to the role of a "superfluous humanity". (Mbembe 2017, 3)

If we take as our definition the classic account of fascism as that reactionary mass movement comprised of an alliance between industrial capital and the petty bourgeoisie against the working class and its political organizations in the context of imperialist rivalries and capitalist crises of over-production, then it is far from clear that what we face today can in any straightforward way be described as "fascism" in this sense. Today, after the defeat of organized labor, there's precious little resistance to dead labor's drive to extract surplus value from living labor. Such a deathly drive underlies colonization, militarism, xenophobia, and, ultimately, war against human beings, Indigenous peoples, especially in North America, India, and in Brazil, along with the very planet itself. Far from having to confront the revolutionary force of organized labour today, at least not

in Europe and North America (Brazil and India evince different logics), today fascism emerges from the phenomenon of accelerated global migration flows resulting from the economic, social and political violence (new forms of primitive accumulation) attendant upon globalization and global climate change. It also responds increasing ontological *insecurity* of subjects of these states, whose fear in an age of massive, irreversible climate change, is increasingly mobilized against pariah peoples (see Konicz 2018; von Manalastas 2019). Such mobilization is based on the recognition that, under the late form of neoliberalism, the line between the citizen and migrant, parvenu and pariah, in other words, "genuine" and "superfluous" humanity is coming to be increasingly blurred.

Here, it is appropriate to invoke Benjamin's notion that behind every fascism is a failed revolution (Žižek 2014). If such a "failed revolution" can be understood not simply in the singular but rather as *several* failed attempts at completing, realizing and transcending the bourgeois revolutions of 1789/1848, then the task of the Left surely must be to consider its future in the light of its own melancholy past. What does this mean? In the context of fascisms that undermine liberal democracy from within, against the backdrop of a combination of ongoing crisis tendencies of the financialized neoliberal order with the looming threat of ecological collapse, rather than adopting a resigned dismissal of liberal democracy, the Left must make significant efforts to distinguish itself from the Far Right's attack on these very institutions. The Right engages what we could call an *abstract* negation, a simple *cancellation*, of the institutions of liberal democracy in the name of "natural" hierarchies of various sorts. In order to avoid "fascist creep" and offer a genuine alternative, the Left must take up a genuinely dialectical politics of *determinate* negation, which is to say, it must simultaneously cancel *and* preserve aspects of the very liberal democracy targeted by the Far Right. It must struggle to defend and preserve civil rights and to expand and deepen *social rights* while critiquing and limiting bourgeois *property rights*. While cancelling the separation between the political and economic spheres—the very separation between "liberalism" (negative freedom) and "democracy" (equality), which means also urgently rethinking and reconfiguring the vital relationship between economic *production* and social reproduction (Bhattacharya 2017)—the Left must insist upon a thoroughgoing democratization of society. This means fighting energetically to maintain and deepen rights and freedoms, especially of association, speech and expression, due process, etc., that are profoundly threatened today around the globe and will only continue to be so under the gathering dark

clouds of global climate change. Only thus will it be possible to redeem the promise of the free and autonomous life—one that also necessitates a non-dominating relationship with external nature—that inheres within the revolutionary horizon of the modern era.

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Fig. 3.1 Protestors attacked by tear gas in Quito, Ecuador (October, 2019). Photo by Jeremy Rayner

Check for updates

CHAPTER 3

Reading Contemporary Latin America in the Light of the 1930s: Cycles of Accumulation and the Politics of Passive Revolution

Jeremy Rayner

This chapter was written in Quito's historic center, accompanied by the buzz of vuvuzelas, the whirr of helicopters, and the smell of teargas as police battled protesters in the street below. The "state of exception"—declared almost immediately upon the commencement of protests—was followed by curfews, a "militarization" decree, eight deaths and thousands more wounded, imprisoned or missing. Although the immediate cause of the protests was an IMF-pleasing liberalization package that would raise fuel prices (among other measures), public debate and protestors' chants quickly took up the possibility of presidential resignation—a surprisingly frequent outcome of mass protests in Ecuador. The assumed victor of a hypothetical election, however, was the authoritarian neoliberal Jaime Nebot, who promised to defend "liberty, democracy and property" from

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_3

the protestors.[1] The absence of viable political options for opponents of neoliberalization was particularly striking, coming scarcely a decade after the inauguration of a "citizen's revolution" that repudiated both neoliberalism and the IMF, while claiming to inaugurate a new, progressive mode of (post) development, sometimes described as "21st century socialism." Nor is Ecuador alone: A cycle of highly contentious protests in the regions, including Haiti, Colombia, Bolivia, Chile, Honduras, Brazil, Nicaragua and Venezuela (as of this writing), indicate a generalized crisis of rule, not entirely dissimilar to that of the 1930s (Fig. 3.1).

In Ecuador, however, the historical memory invoked is the crises of the 1990s and early 2000s, not the 1930s. As is the case for Latin America generally—and in contrast to Europe or the United States—the 1930s lacks special resonance in contemporary public culture. For most of the region, the Great Recession was a passing moment in the midst of an historic commodities boom. As that boom has come to an end, bringing economic troubles in its wake, the obvious comparison is to the more recent period of financial crises and economic depressions between 1980 and 2002, which occurred in living memory of many, and which involved a similar cast of actors (most prominently, the IMF).[2] As for authoritarianism and genocide, the most salient referents are the military dictatorships and counterrevolutionary violence which claimed hundreds of thousands of lives between the 1960s and 1990s. The historical memory that does exist for the 1930s is varied and rather ambiguous, including many aspects of progressive change, along with the formation of dictatorships and episodes of collective violence, including the Chaco War, and the racialized violence that killed tens of thousands in El Salvador the Dominican Republic.

Nevertheless, I will argue that there is insight to be gained by thinking about contemporary Latin America in light of the 1930s—or, rather, the decades-long, global process of political and economic transition that culminated in the 1930s and 1940s. This "crisis of 19th century civilization"

[1] Nebot may also have irreparably damaged his own electoral prospects over the course of the protests by the racist declaration that indigenous protesters should "go back to the mountaintops."

[2] Ecuador, for one, had essentially two decades of depression from 1980 to 2000. This case is extreme but also representative of the basic tendency.

(Polanyi 2001) was shaped by processes of "financial expansion" and "systemic chaos," which returned in force in the 1970s, and which continue to shape our contemporary moment (Arrighi 2010). It is because we are again positioned within such a long moment of financialized global turbulence that Latin Americans can find examples of economic crisis near at hand. It also helps to explain certain similarities in the politics of both periods: most importantly, the emergence of "populist" movements promising revolutionary change, while delivering a moderate expansion of social welfare and a limited capitalist modernization. This process of "passive revolution," which characterized the so-called pink tide of the early twenty-first century as well as the pioneering populisms of the long 1930s, reflects the tensions and contradictions produced by moments of financial expansion and transition between regimes of accumulation—contradictions that have also resulted in fragile transformations that are vulnerable to shifting tides of global capitalism and political reaction.

Financial Expansion, Systemic Chaos and Passive Revolution

A starting point for this essay is the proposition that the first four decades of the twentieth century, and the half century from 1970 to today, are structurally similar periods for the world economy in general, and for Latin America in particular. This structural similarity is produced by long cycles of capitalist accumulation on a global scale, which alternates between "great surges of development," in which new industries are established and expanded, and "financial expansions," when those industries become saturated, and capital, seeing declining returns from reinvestment, seeks other avenues for accumulation (see Arrighi 2010; Perez 2003). These moments of financial expansion are characterized by speculative investments and the formation of "fictitious capital": in unproven technologies, land, and other speculative claims on future income. They are times of stock and real estate bubbles, increased internationalization of capital flows, and aggressive attempts to "profit without producing," through debt-farming and financial intermediation (see Lapavitsas 2013).

It is also during these periods that new technologies are developed, although converting these into a surge of development depends on the creation of a set of new practices, institutions, and infrastructures, what Carlota Perez (2003) calls a "techno-economic paradigm." In the early twentieth century, the emergent technologies were the automobile and

mass production, whose potential would only be realized after the Second World War, while the period since 1970 has been characterized by the disruptive "eruption" of information and communications technologies, which has not (yet) achieved a "great surge" (Perez 2013). The process of transition between "paradigms" is turbulent and historically has only been completed after economic crisis and a transition in global hegemonies (Arrighi 2010). These transitions, while global, follow distinct rhythms in core and periphery: peripheral regions behind the technological curve may come to specialize in technologies of a prior paradigm (Perez 2003, 60–70), and while the great global crises, such as the and the Great Recession, have been centered in the United States and Europe, more peripheral regions experience capitalist crises more frequently, and at earlier moments of the financial expansion.

Such periods of financial expansion present unstable and shifting hegemonies and "systemic chaos," as dominant capitalist powers are challenged politically and economically (Arrighi 2010). For more peripheral regions, including Latin America, the weakening of the hegemonic center and the emergence of competing financial powers create some additional space for autonomy. At the same time, financial expansions provide particularly challenging contexts for projects of national development: competition in established industries is fierce, while the process of financialization itself destabilizes and often drains capital from the periphery. The clearly defined pathway for economic transformation provided by a global "great surge of development"—or at least by the one that occurred in the mid-twentieth century—is absent, in its place a faith in foreign investment, abstract markets, and "entrepreneurialism" (see Elyachar 2005). In Latin America, the shortcomings of economic liberalism in both periods of financial expansion eventually led to the emergence of regimes utilizing state intervention to promote structural change (away from the traditional dependence on natural resource extraction), responding, to a greater or lesser degree, to perceived opportunities in an emergent techno-economic paradigm.

This is, however, a contentious and contradictory outcome of diverse social conflicts, as channeled through the politics of "passive revolution." Here I follow Callinicos' interpretation of Gramsci's "passive revolution" as a "processes through which revolutionary pressures are simultaneously displaced and fulfilled" (2010, 501). In particular, I refer to state projects that promise "revolutionary" change, and do in fact accommodate some demands from below, but without fundamentally altering the distribution

of property and power—a balancing act which has usually implied a state-led project of economic transformation to make room for a reformed social compact. Passive revolution in this sense is part of the zeitgeist of moments of upheaval and political-economic transition. As a concept that expresses contradictory and equivocal processes, it resists ideal types, although it may be more or less aptly applied to particular regimes; Cárdenas's "revolutionary" Mexico makes a particularly good fit, while a transformation that does not declare itself revolutionary hardly merits the term, and neither do those that remain purely rhetorical. Nevertheless, even regimes such as Somoza's Nicaragua or Trujillo's Dominican Republic, which no one could call revolutionary in any meaningful sense, to some extent "displaced and fulfilled" revolutionary pressures from below: they supplemented repression with (very limited) social and economic reforms, flirted with unions, peasant organizations, and leftist parties, and instituted new forms of "strong man" politics that replaced traditional oligarchic rule (see Walter 1993; Turits 2003).

Passive revolution is associated and intertwined with the phenomenon of "populism," but neither term is reducible to the other. Understood as a logic of articulation of diverse social interests (Laclau 2007), some degree of populism has been central to most processes of passive revolution—but not all populist processes are transformative enough to count as passive revolutions (the phenomenon of Velasco Ibarra in Ecuador, for example). Distinguishing between these two processes helps us sort out some of the knottiness that has characterized discussions of Latin American populism as political style and as regime type.

Passive revolutions might be particularly characteristic of the capitalist periphery, where hegemony is difficult to consolidate and where capitalist development requires an active state (see Morton 2011). And Latin America, with its combination of revolutionary republican and socialist traditions and deep-seated inequalities, has been particularly fertile terrain. But history suggests that the politics of passive revolution is temporally, as well as spatially, uneven; here I argue that it has been particularly characteristic of the tail end of periods of financial expansion and turbulent transition between techno-economic paradigms.

The first half of the twentieth century and the decades after 1980 were both periods of economic volatility and recurring crises for Latin America. The frequency of crises (the long downward spikes in Fig. 3.2) in both periods is more important than their cumulative effect on the rate of growth, although this is also significant. This volatility reflects

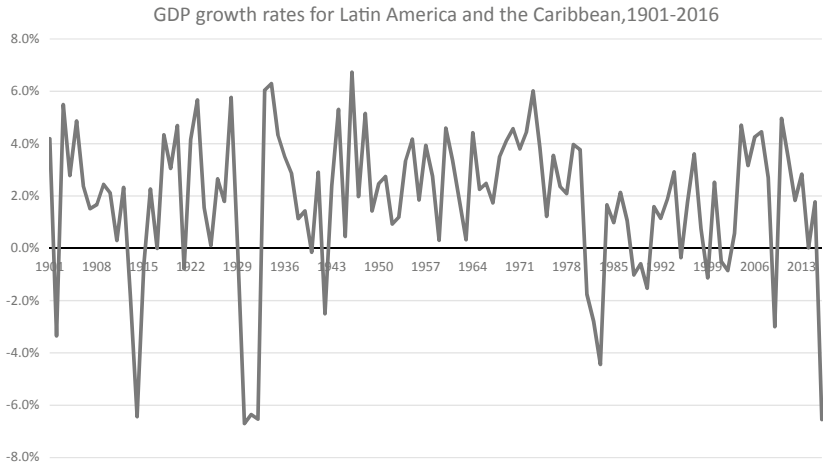


Fig. 3.2 Percent change on prior year, GDP per capita for Latin America and the Caribbean in constant 2011 dollars

dependence on a limited number of exports, speculative capital flows, and hard currency debts: in contrast to the three decades after 1945, the periods 1880–1945 and 1980–2000 saw a number of major financial crises as well as sudden declines in demand for commodity exports (see Bulmer-Thomas 2003; Marichal 1989; Reinhart and Rogoff 2011). Crises provoked diverse forms of discontent, as populations dependent on employment and markets repeatedly had the rug pulled out from under them. At the same time, however, expansion could be just as problematic as contraction. Both financial expansions augmented processes of "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2003): the acquisition of national wealth—from utilities to mines to agricultural land—by foreign investors seeking outlets for surplus capital, and the expansion of extractive export production at the cost of the lands and livelihoods of peasants and Indigenous peoples, in particular. Even where capital brought new technologies and public goods, as in the railroads and utilities installed by foreign investors in the early twentieth century, the terms were often exploitative and widely resented (Bulmer-Thomas 2003; Marichal 1989), as were the privatizations of public utilities and giveaways of natural resources in the neoliberal period.

The authoritarian liberalism that prevailed through the bulk of both financial expansions was ultimately forced to adapt in the face of these contradictions or cede to political movements that emerged to articulate diverse discontents: in either case creating new admixtures of reform and repression. The most transformative of these took the form of passive revolutions that promised fundamental change, accommodated some demands from below and reformed the class structure without radically challenging it. These usually involved some attempts to adapt to the emerging techno-economic paradigm, taking advantage of freedom of movement opened up by the decline of the hegemonic power and the emergence of competing sources of finance: the United States, Germany and France in the first period, Europe and China in the second.[3]

The Early Twentieth Century and the Crisis of the Liberal Order

The early twentieth century was a tumultuous period of financialization and "systemic chaos" on the world stage (Arrighi 2010; Hobsbawm 1989, 1995). Since the late nineteenth century, increasingly centralized capitalist firms allied with increasingly imperialist states, culminating in an unprecedented world war. Capital, over-accumulating in core industries, spread out over the globe in search of natural resources and new investment opportunities, while assuming ever more speculative forms that culminated in the Wall Street crash of 1929.

Latin America had been incorporated into the process of capitalist expansion as a provider of natural resources and consumer goods: wool, wheat, beef, rubber, oil, minerals, cacao, coffee, and bananas. This was a dependent integration that made whole regions susceptible to the fortunes of a single product in a particularly volatile world market, while providing difficult conditions for broad-based economic growth outside of a few countries such as Argentina (Bulmer-Thomas 2003). The "commodity lottery" meant more localized crises, such as the collapse of Amazonian rubber or Ecuadorian cacao, while manifestations of global turbulence—the outbreak of the First World War, the depression of 1920–1921, and the stock market crash of 1929 had effects across the region, as evidenced

[3] Of course, this general and schematic account papers over the nuances of particular historical experiences. In doing so I hope only to provoke further consideration of how attention to larger temporal and spatial scales might enrich our explanatory frameworks.

in Fig. 3.2. Even some forgotten incidents of financial turbulence could have important ripple effects: the Wall Street "panic of 1907" provoked a three-year depression in Mexico, and was particularly significant in the northern mining region that nursed the first movements of the Mexican revolution in 1910 (Cahill 1998; Meyers 1994).

The Mexican revolution also responded to the alienation of peasant and Indigenous lands (notably in Zapata's state of Morelos) and growing foreign control over mineral resources, which typified Porfirio Díaz's presidency (1884–1911), but which also occurred to greater or lesser degrees in other parts of the region, generating similar tensions. To the extent that the early twentieth century did produce an expansion of industry and services, notably in Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and Mexico, new working- and middle-class groups emerged with distinct organizational capacities and demands, as well as new dependencies on market conditions.

The overall trend of increasing foreign investment (both direct and indirect) from the nineteenth century became a "foreign loan splurge" in the 1920s (Marichal 1989). This capital largely came from Wall Street, which was becoming the epicenter of an increasingly speculative process of financial expansion. Initially used to sustain shaky public finances in the wake of the depression of 1920–1921, as the decade progressed foreign capital in Latin America was directed toward "development loans" to finance the construction of public works—railroads, ports and utilities—usually by foreign firms, under questionable contracts (ibid.). The US military interventions that accompanied this rise of foreign investment also provoked responses ranging from armed resistance movements to a more diffuse critique of imperialism.

The onset of the Great Depression brought these processes to a head. Fiscal problems emerged even before the crash of 1929, as capital was redirected from development loans to Latin America toward the bubble on Wall Street. The subsequent financial collapse and dramatic fall in commodity prices provoked a generalized (although also unevenly severe) crisis in the region, including debt defaults, massive unemployment and impoverishment, protests, rebellions and coups (Bulmer-Thomas 2003; Drinot and Knight 2014; Marichal 1989).

Thirteen governments fell to coups between the years 1930 and 1934 alone (Knight 2014, 289). This immediate political reaction was, however, generally reactive: a more coherent set of political responses to the crisis of the liberal world order would take time to emerge. Diverse forms of resistance, radicalism, and reformism had flourished in the volatile years before 1929. "The social question" had figured prominently in public

debate, art, and literature, while homegrown and hybrid radicalisms flourished, drawing on anarchist, Marxist and other socialist currents from Europe as well as on domestic traditions; the diverse tendencies of the Mexican revolution, Sandinismo, APRA in Peru, the writings of Martí and Mariátegui, and others, which in turn influenced each other.

The crisis of the 1930s augmented these antagonisms, leading to their gradual and piecemeal cooptation through the formation of political regimes that, in varying forms and degrees, both "displaced and fulfilled" revolutionary pressures from below, while laying the seeds of a distinct regional adjustment to the emergent techno-economic paradigm of mass production, which would reach its full global expression under US hegemony after 1945. In broad strokes, these are the elements of passive revolution: it created regimes that fulfilled some demands from below (in labor legislation, land reform, etc.), while instituting a process of capitalist modernization "from above" that ultimately expanded capitalist accumulation by placing it on a new footing and opening up new pathways (see Morton 2011).

This most iconic examples are Mexico under Cárdenas (1934–1940), Brazil under Vargas (1930–1945), and Argentina under Perón (1946–1955), where substantial institutional changes and "social reforms" accompanied the "structural transformation" of the economy toward "inward-looking" development and industrialization. But to one or another degree this dual process characterized the emergent politics of the period; the short-lived "military socialism" in Bolivia, socialist and popular front governments in Chile, reformist governments in Colombia and Cuba, and even the new breed of authoritarian strong-man dictatorships in Central America and the Caribbean. Degrees of repressive accommodation were more characteristic than the kind of bald state terror employed by the Salvadoran military regime, which infamously massacred tens of thousands of peasants and Indigenous in 1932.

These transformations emerged from pragmatic political and economic adjustments in the context of crisis and a changing capitalist order, rather than from some previously existing program, consolidating gradually through the 1930s and into the 1940s. In politics, a "populist" style was developed by leaders such as Vargas, Cárdenas, and Perón, which would have profound and long-lasting impacts. Influenced by Italian Fascism, with its cult of personality and its appeal to corporatism, it also articulated the diverse unrealized demands that had accumulated in these troubled decades, as a promise of transformation by a unified people under a

vigorous (masculine) leader. As this politics operated more through the projection of hopes onto "empty signifiers" than on any program or ideology (see Laclau 1979, 2007), its class politics was flexible and therefore ideally suited for the shifting accommodations of passive revolution. Labor legislation and social welfare, and more rarely, land reform, were accompanied by policies oriented to fostering emergent industrial bourgeoisies.

The process of political consolidation was accompanied by the adaption of economic structures to new constraints and emergent opportunities, which ultimately led to the emergence of a new economic development model for the region (Bulmer-Thomas 2003). The gold standard system that had briefly held sway over Latin American finances was abandoned by necessity in the context of declining export earnings and withdrawal of international credit; but flexible exchange rates and money creation subsequently came to be seen as necessary tools of economic policy generally and industrial policy in particular. Import substitution likewise emerged originally out of necessity, provided by the collapse of export markets. If this did not lead directly to the postwar expansion of import substitution industrialization (ISI), it did provide examples and laid the seeds for this more comprehensive program. The expansion of public works provided employment in the face of dangerous levels of popular discontent, but also laid down the infrastructures for automobiles, airplanes, modern social welfare and mass production: the infrastructure of the emergent techno-economic paradigm. These processes converged with the global shift toward active states engaged in economic planning, employment and infrastructural creation in response to the 1930s crisis, from Franklin Roosevelt's United States to Italian and German fascism, the Five-Year Plans of the USSR, and Japanese-led industrialization in colonial East Asia (see also Taek-Gwang Lee, this volume).

The "Golden Age" of Capitalism (and Socialism) 1945–1975

As the outlines of a new regime of accumulation under US hegemony were clarified in the postwar period, the pragmatic adjustments of the 1930s emerged as a distinct model of development centered on ISI, whose principal intellectual advocate was the Argentine economist Raúl Prebisch. This model was an adaptation of the emerging techno-economic

paradigm of mass production for Latin America: exchange rate and tariff policies were used to encourage the installation of mass-production industries, complemented by the creation of the necessary infrastructure (electricity, roads, airports, schools, etc.).

This was a period marked by the consolidation of two forms of the mass-production techno-economic paradigm on a global scale, US corporate capitalism and the central planning of the USSR (which was very much influenced by the Fordist example). The mid-twentieth century therefore offered two seemingly clear pathways for modernizing (industrial) development, which tended to sort both defenses of, and challenges to, the existing order. The diversity of early twentieth-century anti-systemic radicalism, with its many homegrown hybrids of agrarian, artisanal, cooperativist, anarchist, and socialist politics ceded to a more uniform revolutionary program for the creation of a socialist state. At the same time, capitalism seemed to offer a pathway of national industrialization fostered by state intervention, in the context of which distributional struggles also flourished, including a relatively powerful labor movement. The existence of these two well-defined pathways, each with its own infrastructure of political, economic and military support, sharpened the fault lines and raised the stakes of confrontation. In this context the United States collaborated with regional elites to block the socialist path and maintain access to the region's markets and products, failing only in Cuba.

The sign of anticommunism was used to justify the repression of workers and peasants through campaigns of torture, terror and mass murder, eventually resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths. This recourse to violent repression was especially notable in the Southern Cone in the 1970s and Central America in the 1980s. In the latter case, the violence reflected the attempt by agrarian elites to maintain a coercive and exclusionary system of surplus extraction, which had remained relatively untouched by the processes of passive revolution and industrialization elsewhere in the region. In the Southern Cone, reaction responded instead to the internal contradictions of those processes. The mobilization of labor in support of programs of national industrialization—a mobilization further encouraged by industrialization's successes—began to threaten the profitability of capitalist industry. And while it allowed for relatively rapid industrial growth in some cases, ISI contained its own contradictions. A high degree of dependence on multinationals for foreign direct investment limited the development of

domestic productive capacity, while multinational firms often preferred to repatriate their profits rather than reinvest. The development of industry in consumer goods meant the increased imports of capital goods, which in turn meant that ISI often worsened, rather than improving, the balance of payments (Bulmer-Thomas 2003). And the lack of any real revolutionary or even strongly redistributive movement in the region meant the ongoing domination of rentier landed interests, with little real interest in industrial development, and the stunting of the domestic consumer markets upon which import substitution had to depend.

It was in this context that military dictatorships took over, employing extreme violence and an anti-political, technocratic discourse to counter populist mobilization (Loveman et al. 1997). The limited accommodation of popular demands was sacrificed, leaving only the second moment of the passive revolution: modernization from above. It was under this guise of modernization that the military governments in Chile, Argentina and Brazil began the first moves toward what would come to be known as neoliberalization (Munck 1985), which would merge with the global processes of systemic chaos and financial expansion marking the end of the surge of mass production and the incipient beginnings of a new regime of accumulation centered on information and communication technologies.

Neoliberalism and Post: The Return of Financialization

About 1970, the great surge of development of the mid-twentieth century came to an end, initiating a process of financial expansion and systemic chaos with important parallels to the early twentieth century. Arrighi (2010) dates this transition to the late 1960s, when large pools of surplus capital began to destabilize the Bretton Woods monetary system, followed by the US defeat in Vietnam and the OPEC oil price hikes of the 1970s. For Perez (2003), the key moment is the invention of the microprocessor in 1971, initiating the turbulent process of transition from the mass production to information and communications (ICT) paradigm. Along with other innovations in transport and communications that facilitated the reorganization of global systems of production, these changes certainly pointed to a destabilizing transition for Latin America.

The first decade of financial expansion in fact meant a last hurrah for inward-looking development and the mass-production paradigm in Latin

America. Several Latin American states were direct beneficiaries of rising oil prices (especially Venezuela, Mexico and Ecuador). Others were recipients of the surplus money capital made available by the oil price rises; the recycling of petrodollars contributed enormously to the financial expansion already in progress, further augmented by the US loose monetary policy (Arrighi 2010, 321–324). Lending to Latin America, and particularly Latin American states, seemed a safer bet than reinvesting in the expansion of industries. For Latin American states, these resources promised the ability to transcend the limits of ISI, by enabling the shift from consumer goods to capital goods, although these investments were not necessarily well-planned or executed (see, e.g., MacLeod 2004).

The rise of interest rates on the dollar and resulting global recession at the end of the 1970s brought this expansion to a halt, putting Latin American states in the unsustainable position of greatly increased debt service, on the one hand, and declining revenues and worsening balance of payments, on the other. The subsequent "Latin American debt crisis" brought a dramatic worsening of livelihoods and extensive cut-backs in social welfare spending. This was followed by austerity, privatization, and liberalization in the context of structural adjustment programs administered under the tutelage of the IMF and the World Bank and guided by the neoliberal ideology that came to be known as the Washington Consensus. This adjustment involved a redirection away from both agricultural and industrial production for national and regional markets, a process of deindustrialization throughout the region and a renewed emphasis on the export of primary products from agriculture and mining. There was also a return to the liberal capital accounts of the early twentieth century, along with a renewed commitment to "hard money," including fixed exchange rates in Argentina, and in El Salvador and Ecuador, outright dollarization. This return to a modified form of the monetary and financial policies of the early twentieth century also brought in tow a predictable "return of depression economics" (Krugman 2009) resulting in a series of financial crises in the 1990s, notably in Mexico, Argentina and Ecuador.

Financial expansion historically has also provided resources for the spread of industrialization to new areas, especially those serving distinct markets (Arrighi 2010). The expansion of ISI in Latin America in the 1970s owed something to this phenomenon. But since the debt crisis of the 1980s, capital has rather flowed toward the core. Liberalization made this worse, in part because peripheral nations have had to maintain large reserves of hard currency as a hedge against speculative capital flows

(Lapavitsas 2013). The capital that does arrive is often either short-term and speculative, is essentially extractive (such as mining), or has been dedicated to acquiring assets and extracting rents, as in the case of utilities privatizations (typified by the famous "water wars" in Cochabamba, Bolivia). After the crash of 2008—accompanied by a little-remembered spike in food prices—there was also a surge in "land grabbing" by transnational corporations, as surplus capital looked for assets that promised more than the low or negative interest rates on offer in the core (see Edelman et al. 2013). These are all reminiscent of the kinds of investments that characterized Latin America at the beginning of the twentieth century, a kind of neo-Porfiriato.

This was of course not a simple return to the past. The process of industrialization was not entirely reversed, and the emergent regime of accumulation created some new economic dynamics. The northern part of the region, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean, developed export-processing for (mainly) US industry and services. Tourism expanded and was held out as a promise of development for depressed rural areas throughout the region, especially those with tropical beaches or scenic ruins. For the most part, however, these industries did not provide a basis even for sustained economic growth comparable to the postwar period, much less broadly shared development.

Rural development as a comprehensive strategy was essentially abandoned, as public and private resources were again directed toward fostering export agriculture, often in the hands of agribusiness. The already limited standard postwar development package for peasant agriculture, which consisted of (limited) land reform and technical assistance, often oriented toward fostering the production of subsistence products for the national market, was abandoned in favor of a piecemeal "projectism" directed by international NGOs, with even fewer results. De-peasantization and outmigration followed. Often the main hope voiced in rural areas today is for a vaguely defined "community tourism," while the historic demand for comprehensive transformation of rural property relations (land reform) has been largely abandoned (see, e.g., Bretón 2011).

This shift is symptomatic of broader changes in the prospects and agenda of oppositional movements. The long period of depression, stagnation and repeated crises that afflicted Latin America fostered enormous discontent among a diverse array of groups. But the absence of a clearly defined pathway for progressive capitalist development was matched, on

the left, by the collapse of the centrally planned version of the mass-production paradigm, and the revolutionary socialist politics that had accompanied it. New social movements put forth a diversity of more localized or sectoral demands, or articulated a broad opposition to "neoliberalism" with a vaguely conceived sense that alternatives must be found ("another world is possible"). For left-leaning intellectuals, socialist development was replaced by varieties of post-development, most of which remained at the level of critique. There was a focus on process over result, as in the widespread demands for participatory and direct democracy. Like the early twentieth century, this was a period of diverse, localized demands and homegrown radicalisms, often innovative but rarely aspiring to a comprehensive program, a situation that mirrored—and often overlapped with—the retreat of capitalist accumulation to a vaguely defined entrepreneurialism.

By the end of the twentieth century, these diverse demands began to be articulated around the signs of Bolivarianism, Socialism of the Twenty-First Century, and other, similar "empty signifiers." This repeated aspects of the process and sequence that characterized the emergence of consolidated "populist" movements at the beginning of the century. And, once again, the process took on an aspect of passive revolution. Participatory, pluralistic, and radical democratic programs were subordinated to top-down programs of modernization and development, often in more or less tacit pacts with economic elites, involving varying degrees of direct appropriation by political leaders themselves (see Modonesi 2015; Svampa 2016; Webber 2011). Despite post development rhetoric associated with "*buen vivir*" (good living), development was on the agenda again (Caria and Domínguez 2016), as it had *not* been in the neoliberal period. Much of this was a traditional return to the public investment in social welfare and infrastructure that had been so neglected. As in the 1930s, there were also tentative moves toward programs of economic modernization that might promote the growth of new industries. The Washington consensus was partially replaced by a "consensus of commodities" (Svampa 2013), which emphasized the nationalization and reinvestment of natural resource rents. But beyond the basic tasks of improving social welfare, the strategic goal of reinvestment was less than clear. Although there was some attempt to encourage manufacturing industries, it was

evident that the manufacturing hub of the future would be East Asia—and in any case these were "mature" sectors of the last wave of development that were now characterized by over-investment and market saturation. Other investments were geared to an idea of the opportunities provided by the emerging techno-economic paradigm; for example, Ecuador identified tourism and biotechnology as priority sectors, while Bolivia began an audacious project to process lithium, plans are largely consonant with Perez's argument that the emerging niche for Latin America is the development of "process industries" based on natural resources (Perez 2010)—although none of these programs has actually resulted in a significant economic transformation.

Certainly, enduring issues, such as the concentration of wealth in the hands of an essentially rentier elite, insufficient investment in education and infrastructure, and domination by imperialist interests and transnational capital, have continued to present obstacles to dynamic, much less inclusive capitalist development. But the more basic fact might be that the framework for a global "surge of development" has not been established, while conditions of financial expansion and systemic chaos continue to prevail.

The "progressive" governments of the early twenty-first century did benefit from financial expansion and systemic chaos in a way. Both phenomena contributed to the formation of the "commodity super cycle," which financed economic growth and the expansion of social welfare and infrastructure in this period; the surge of capital looking for profits in speculative activities was a major contributor, reflected, for example, in the explosion of futures trading (Bain 2013). There were complex feedback loops, as any chaotic situation will produce: the Arab Spring, partly provoked by a speculation-driven rise in food prices, eventually produced a decline in oil production (and a renewed round of speculation in oil) that caused oil prices to rise dramatically again for a few years.

The other great source of the commodity supercycle was the development in China, including a massive project of urbanization and fixed capital formation, driven in part by counter-cyclical measures taken to boost domestic demand after 2008. The rise of Chinese capitalism might eventually inaugurate a new regime of accumulation or techno-economic paradigm, but for the moment it remains part of the panorama of systemic chaos and financialization, precisely because China has largely developed within the matrix of the previous, mass-production paradigm. While

offshoring to China and Latin America helped transnational corporations from the capitalist core to increase their profits, China subsequently developed their own firms to compete in already-saturated product lines, such as steel, auto and electronics. Neither process is propitious for Latin American mass-production industry, while Chinese interest in Latin America seems resolutely set on gaining access to its natural resources.

For all these reasons, what seemed to be a new birth of development was in fact another manifestation of systemic chaos and financial expansion that could not outlast the boom years of the commodity supercycle. (Even Brazil, one of the foundational "BRICs" with a large industrial base, still has an export profile centered on a few primary product exports—such as soy—which meant that collapse of prices in 2014 drove Brazil into its worst crisis since the Great Depression.) Although some effects remain—a healthier and better educated workforce, perhaps with higher expectations for public services, and some highways and dams of variable quality—it is clear that the pink tide and neostructuralism did not place Latin America on a new path. The rightwing governments that have since replaced the Left through much of the region have even less to offer, except a return to generic neoliberal rhetoric of entrepreneurialism and foreign investment masking an even more intensive extractivism. In Brazil, and increasingly elsewhere, this has been armored by a recourse to violent repression, especially of Indigenous and environmental activists.

Conclusion

I have used two cyclical theories of capitalism for the useful heuristic that they provide in explaining the similarities between the early 20th and 21st centuries. I do not mean to argue that these are unchanging temporal structures, or that they apply to the more distant past, much less the future. Many of the characteristics of these two moments have been defined in relation to the post-Second World War period that separates them. It is likely, however, that *that* is the exceptional time, for the region and indeed for global capitalism, and that much of what I have outlined as characteristic of these two moments of systemic chaos, is rather the norm for (semi-) peripheral capitalism, or for capitalism in general. There are certainly, from where I sit now, few signs of a "great surge of development" on the horizon, which suggests that the revolutions to come—however passive or participatory they may be—must chart courses distinct from those that have brought us here.

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Après la proclamation de la République en Grèce : les manifestants promènent dans les rues d'Athènes de grands portraits des chefs républicains.
A gauche, M. Papanastassiou, au centre, l'amiral Hadjikyriacos, à droite, le général Condylis.

Fig. 4.1 Declaration of the Second Hellenic Republic (1924–1935)

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CHAPTER 4

Organic Crisis and Counter-Hegemonic Responses in the Interwar Era and the Era of Memoranda in Greece

George Souvlis and Despina Lalaki

Historical comparisons do not come without challenges. While indispensable to the social sciences, comparative historical research can lead to reification, the exaggeration of differences or similarities, and static analyses. And comparativism is not always compatible with historical uniqueness and incommensurability. However, this might not be the case when the comparison is not "at the level of empirical events, which are indeed often unique and in some respects incommensurable, but at the level of the underlying causal mechanisms that interact in changing, contingent conjunctures to produce unique events" (Steinmetz 2014, 413–414) (Fig. 4.1).

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_4

Our comparative analysis of two case studies, the rise of the Metaxas regime in the 1930s and the advance of Syriza—alongside the re-emergence of Nazi ideology encapsulated by the Golden Dawn—in the 2010s, is not an attempt to identify any constants or to produce a general theory. Instead, we seek to understand and interpret a series of events and underlying causes, going beyond apparent resemblances, unproblematic comparisons, and direct causation linking the economic crisis with the rise of the extreme Right or the Left during the two periods in question (Fig. 4.2).

Similarities at the causal level (e.g., economic crises), but not at the empirical level, (i.e., political impacts during both periods), give form to what we call a "contrast explanation." This approach identifies how a set of similar causal mechanisms produce different events. In trying to understand why *x* rather than *y* appeared in circumstances where *y* was expected, we take as a starting point Dylan Riley's (2019) explanation of fascist regimes according to which the development of civil society may happen in the absence of a hegemonic politics. Organic crises, as Gramsci describes, are situations in which civil society's democratic demands cannot be sufficiently addressed through the existing political institutions, may lead to a crisis of representation in which "the traditional parties, in that particular organizational form, with the particular men who constitute, represent, and lead them, are no longer recognized by their class (or fractions of a class) as its expression" (Gramsci 1971, 210). The fascism of interwar Europe, as Riley explains, did not arise out of a pathological form of civil society, but as a form of associational politics expressing a desire to "make the modern state more representative of the nation than was possible with liberal parliamentary institutions" (Riley 2019, 11). Having conflated liberalism with democracy and authoritarianism with antidemocratic movements and regimes, critical literature on civil society has largely missed this point.

A crisis constitutes a turning point in time, but also disruption and discontinuity. In history and historical sociology, a crisis is understood as an "event"—these "relatively rare subclasses of happenings that significantly transform structures. An eventful conception of temporality, therefore, is one that takes into account the transformation of structures by events" (Sewell 1996, 262). Yet an event—often listed as a synonym of crisis—is a mechanism linking past and future, and its importance is primarily established in terms of its location in time and space as well as in relation to



Fig. 4.2 Golden Dawn Trial/Kalariti's Apology by Molly Crabapple. Image provided by courtesy of the artist

a series of other events. There is little one can understand about the current crisis, the meteoric rise of Syriza and its electoral victory, or Golden Dawn's inroads into parliamentary politics, unless they are placed within a historical perspective and explained as a constellation of factors and contingencies, as a series of social interactions impinging on each other in space and time. Thus, we offer a synopsis and analysis of the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic politics following the collapse of the Greek Junta, during the era known as *metapolitefsi*, meaning polity and regime change, up until the eruption of the 2008 world crisis. Similarly, we trace the links between the Metaxas dictatorship and the series of events that preceded it.

Intra-Bourgeois Struggles and the Metaxas Dictatorship

The Archimedean point of interwar Greek politics was the Goudi coup of August, 1909. Organized by the officers of the Military League, the coup aimed at putting an end to the previous, "corrupted" political order. Its main outcome, however, was to introduce Eleftherios Venizelos into the political scene; a Cretan liberal politician who would remain the central political figure of Greece until his death in 1936 (Maroniti 2010). Socially, the consequences of this event were decisive for the fate of modern Greece: Scholars of the Greek interwar period define it as a "bourgeois revolution," since the Venizelist project was backed by, and consciously foregrounded the interests of, the "commercial, shipping and industrial bourgeoisie" (Mavrogordatos 1983, 123). More precisely, as the historical sociologist Kostas Tsoukalas (1976) has argued, the Goudi coup resulted in the dethronement of a specific section of the bourgeoisie, which aligned socially with landowners and found political expression in the old political establishment, the same fraction that endorsed Royalism.

In political terms, the project of bourgeois modernization crystallized in the formation of two broad political coalitions, Venizelism and Royalism. The former based its political identity on the Greek Republic, the latter on the institution of Monarchy. The respective political epicenters of these two coalitions were the Liberal Party, with Eleftherios Venizelos as its leader, and the People's Party, led by Dimitrios Gounaris and then Panagis Tsaldaris. The precise composition of the coalitions changed according to the conjuncture, in which the two aforementioned parties were joined by smaller parties ideologically affiliated with them (Hering 2008).

These political coalitions gained legitimacy by deploying a traditional patron-client dualism, with the former being constituted either by individuals or by wider groups and institutions. Parliament members in this system were notables who, with the aid of intermediaries entrenched in the constituency of the patron-politician, traded favors for political support from below (Charalampis 1996). This relationship derived from a society in which the peasantry was a central social category. It had a vertical and contingent character. This feature of Greek parliamentary democracy between 1918 and 1936 accounts to a great extent for its later dissolution, as we shall see. More narrowly, we argue that the continuation of the pre-modern clientelistic political system as the key mediator of demands from below, within the conditions of post-1931 financial and social crises, could not offer necessary solutions to a society obtaining an explicit class character and in need of modern universal state institutions that could intervene and regulate the relationship between labor and capital. In other words, the state's inability to offer class-oriented solutions to a proletarianized populace, while insisting on a traditional laissez-faire mentality at the level of the economy and advancing clientelism as a form of political mediation, transformed the hegemonic crisis that the political system was confronting into an "organic crisis", ultimately leading to its dissolution and to the establishment of Metaxas regime in August, 1936.

A possible solution to this impasse would have been for the two key political coalitions to establish impersonal local political organizations in their constituencies to create stable relationships with the groups they were aiming to represent, and to put forward and press for state policies that would address their demands. Neither coalition implemented these possible solutions in the 1920s, or even in the 1930s, when the sociopolitical crisis was more than apparent. The responsibility for the persistence of a traditional party structure lay with notable MP's in each coalition who were afraid that a change in the Liberal and People's Parties toward a modern mass party structure would reduce their political influence (Mavrogordatos 1983, 86, 114).

The only exception to this reasoning was the Communist Party of Greece that, since its founding, followed the organizational logic of the socialist and communist parties of the period in building local branches and having the working class as its point of reference. The Communist Party's influence throughout the interwar period would be limited because of its position on the Macedonian Question, and because of its

targeting of the urban working classes, which were a minority compared to the rest of the laboring populace (Sfikas 2004, 45; Mavrogordatos 1983, 148). This would change only in the mid-1930s when the party changed its approach to both issues, significantly widening its audience. It was this structural feature, a potential mass party with local branches, together with the conjunctural change of its political direction through the adoption of the popular-front policy, which accounts for the fear that the political establishment developed toward the Communist Party in the mid-1930s. In fact this was a time when the party's structures had almost collapsed and the possibility for an immediate takeover of political power by the communist forces was rather remote.

Throughout the interwar period, both coalitions adopted an interclass rhetoric aimed at representing the "Greek people." This populist discursive tactic was also reflected in the organizational strategy of both coalitions, as each sought to form alliances with sections of all classes: the working class, the petit bourgeoisie, the emerging middle classes, and the economic elites (Mavrogordatos 1983, 114–115). This also explains the fragile hegemonic consensus that the political system achieved. Different classes, represented by parties without either solid ideologies or stable organizational structures, pressed for building modern welfare institutions, which in moments of social crisis took the side of the upper classes. Mavrogordatos more precisely describes the fragile historical blocs of the two coalitions:

> Antivenizelism essentially represented a survival or even a resurrection of the class alliance which had characterized the 'historical bloc' of 19th century Greece (i.e., Old Greece). Bourgeois landowners, rentiers, and financiers around the National Bank, artisans and other precapitalist petty bourgeois strata, and the yeomanry had been integral parts of this alliance, constituted under the hegemony of the state bourgeoisie and the auspices of monarchy….In contrast Venizelism represented an effort to establish and consolidate the new hegemony of the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie at the head of 'several classes joined together in some general direction,' that is, in a "national" party inspired by a comprehensive program. This program originally combined pragmatic irredentism with drastic internal reform and seems to have initially attracted widespread popular support among all petty bourgeois, worker, and peasant strata. (Mavrogordatos 1983, 180–181)

Both hegemonic blocs were under bourgeois rule; they privileged different specific class fractions even as they shared a sacrosanct value: the reproduction of capitalist property relations.

Returning to our narrative of events of the interwar period, the first crucial radical move in Venizelism was the distribution of the big landed estates to peasants without land property with the objective of gaining social legitimacy from below. The urgency of responding to this social demand became clear after the bloody Kileler rising of 1910 when the peasants revolted against land owners (Kontogiorgi 2006, 122). From this point on, a historical bond between the peasants and Venizelism was created. This political decision had long-term consequences for the country, since the peasants and the agrarian movement remained under the hegemonic rule of bourgeois politics, which prevented the kinds of developments that took place in other parts of Europe, such as the creation of systematic agrarian organizations from below and the consequent revolts that elsewhere contributed to the emergence of fascism (see Riley 2019). Venizelos made a conscious decision to bond the party to the peasant population in order to guarantee, on the one hand, its electoral support throughout the interwar period, and on other, to stabilize the bourgeois status quo.

The next event to define the character of Greek interwar politics, and society in general, was the political divide that emerged in 1916–1917 between the supporters of Venizelos and the supporters of King Constantine over the issue of whether or not Greece should participate in World War I. The debate provoked intense political polarization, the "National Schism," which lasted until the establishment of the Metaxas regime in 1936 (Tassiopoulos 2006, 260). This division reflected two different world-perspectives: Venizelism had an extroverted imperialist vision, aiming to use alliance with the Entente to gain access to new markets that would benefit the Greek and British economic elites who endorsed its hegemonic project, while the Royalists adopted an introverted, defensive political outlook to protect the existing order of things and the social classes that would be affected by the capitalist expansion (Varnava 2012).

The victory of the Entente in World War I allowed for the continuation of the imperialist expansion in Turkey by securing an expansion of the Greek domain in Smyrna, and the political domination of Venizelos with the exile of King Constantine on June 15, 1917 (Clogg 1992, 264). The "victory" of the Greek army on the side of Entente worked as

an additional factor preventing a fascist movement from emerging in the post-World War I conjuncture in Greece. But socially, the continuation of the war for over a decade alienated many of Venizelos's supporters, making for an even more fragile hegemonic project (Mavrogordatos 1983, 143).

Despite the gains of Venizelos's diplomatic negotiations in the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, his party was unexpectedly defeated in the national elections of 1920, leading him to leave the country (Vatikiotis 1998, 110). The Royalists, against their electoral campaign promises, continued the war with Turkey that Venizelos had started in May, 1919. An overestimation of the capabilities of the divided Greek army, along with its abandonment by the other big powers, would lead to its defeat in September 1922. After this experience, the Greek state would not be the same (Pentzopoulos 1962, 46).

The defeat of the Greek army in Turkey in the summer of 1922 led to the expulsion of 1.2 million ethnic Greeks from Turkey, their resettlement in Greece, and the delimiting of Greek and Turkish borders by the Treaty of Lausanne the following year (Chatty 2012, 86). These events had significant implications for the geographical, political, and social structure of Greek society during the following decades. On the one hand, delimiting the Greek state put an end to the country's imperialist aspirations in Asia Minor. This created conditions for the formation of a robust economic elite within the borders of the Greek state, substantially contributing to the economic development of the country (Mavrogordatos 1983, 181). On the other hand, the resettlement of refugees in Greece was a key precondition for the development of a sizable working class, sections of which aligned politically with the Communist Party (Leontidou 1990, 70). In other words, the end of the war, the new borders, and population exchanges between the two countries fostered new social stratifications: two key classes of political modernity, working class and bourgeoisie, which barely existed up until this point.

The next crucial event of the interwar period was the election of August 19, 1928 when the Venizelist camp won and made Venizelos the leader of a five-party coalition (Gallant 2016, 213). In the new conjuncture, Venizelos was aware of the need to diversify his constituency in order to forge a new hegemonic project. Among the subaltern classes,

he directed his energy to the peasants of the country. The urban workers could not be integrated in the Venizelist hegemonic block through access to private property as had been achieved with the peasants through the distribution of land. The Liberal Party considered the urban workers a potential danger, and they were left without any provisions. But the peasants, with the state's help, received access to loans through the Agricultural Bank. In this conjuncture, the upper classes could not expect an expansion of the Greek state and a concomitant opening of new markets through imperialist interventions. But Venizelism did secure loans from foreign banks that were destined, among other things, for public investments (Stefanidis 2006).

The measures provided to the lower classes did not guarantee economic stability, either for peasants who mainly had access to small plots and accumulated debts, or to the urban working class who were low-paid and for whom there were no welfare provisions. In the absence of measures capable of securing consent, Venizelos's new hegemonic project was unavoidably combined with extensive repression of unrest from below. Indicative of the Venizelist strategy, was the Idionymon, the anticommunist bill submitted to the parliament on behalf of the Liberal Party a few months after the 1928 elections (Ghikas 2004, 68). This was an institutional tool that Venizelos considered necessary to prevent further radicalization of the labor and agrarian social and political forces, especially in light of the radical change of social stratification brought by the advent of 1.2 million refugees. With the passage of this bill into law, anticommunism became an official, integral aspect of the Greek political establishment, filling an ideological gap created by the collapse of the Venizelist imperialist project. Moreover, the unwillingness of Venizelos to adopt consensual measures to integrate the working masses peacefully within the dominant political order was further clarified.

Reactions from below consequently emerged. More precisely, the emergence of the global financial crisis of 1929 ignited the social rage of farmers, many of whom were refugees, whose products were oriented to export markets that were significantly reduced with the collapse of the free market economy (Seferiades 1999, 315–316). Economic hardship, along with the 1930 Ankara Treaty between Greece and Turkey (which stipulated that refugees' assets in both countries would be considered

assets of the departed country) proved crucial for shifting a critical number of the refugees' votes from the Liberal Party to the parties of the Left. This change was crystallized in elections on September 25, 1932: almost twenty percent of the votes of refugees moved from Venizelos' Party to the Agrarian and the Communist parties. In the following elections in March, 1933, Tsaldaris' Party was the largest party within the Greek parliament, conquering 118 out of 248 seats, thus securing victory over the Venizelists after years of successive electoral defeats (Kritikos 2013, 365–366).

The wider context of this shift was the destabilization of the Greek economy—and consequently the Greek political scene—as an effect of the global financial crisis. The devaluation of the British pound on September 21, 1931 had significant economic consequences for Greece that eventually led to Greece's exit from the gold standard. The increase in interest rates, a significant compression of the real economy, and the decrease of reserves from foreign investors, were some of those consequences. Obligatory protectionist measures adopted by the following governments boosted both industrial development and agriculture. In terms of social impact, these measures slightly improved peasants' living standards by raising the prices of their products, though it had the opposite effects for the rest of the working people: the urban working class, civil servants, and artisans (Mazower 1991). A worsening of subaltern classes' living conditions did not come as a direct outcome of the global financial crisis, but rather as a consequence of the Greek political establishment's failure to adopt welfare provisions. Interventionism to boost the economy was not enough in a historical period during which the crucial issue was the regulation of the relation between capital and labor.

Until the establishment of Metaxas regime three years later, Venizelism was on the offensive, using all possible means to regain the political power lost in the 1933 elections and in subsequent electoral contests. Military intervention was its main method of recuperating what was lost in parliament. The most indicative examples of this tendency were two coups, in 1933 and 1935, organized by general Plastiras to restore Venizelist power. Events during the fourteen months between the coup under Venizelos and the abolition of democracy under Metaxas have been aptly summarized by Zink:

> On the surface, this period was characterized by (1) the removal of the Venizelists from the centers of political and military power, (2) the displacement of the moderates by the extremists as leaders of the anti-Venizelist bloc, (3) the further intensification of the National Schism, (4) the restoration of the Monarchy, (5) the growing appeal of authoritarian ideologies among right-wing forces, (6) increased social tension resulting from the social inequalities engendered by Greece's economic recovery, and (7) continuing state repression of social and labour protest. On a more fundamental level, this period of crisis can be seen as a process in which the intensification of the intra-bourgeois struggle for dominance within the hegemonic bloc (encompassing both Venizelists and anti-Venizelists) developed into a crisis of the traditional political structures and instruments of bourgeois hegemony itself. (Zink 2000, 230)

More precisely, in this new conjuncture, where the Royalists dominated the political game, the role of the King was upgraded to decisively intervening in the world of politics. On March 5, Metaxas was appointed by King George II as Minister of Defense and then Vice-President of the government. This decision revealed the King's political orientation toward the far-right royalist fractions, since Metaxas had made his antiparliamentarian reasoning public since the end of 1933 (Clogg 1987, 12).

Metaxas became one of the two key figures of the Greek political scene, alongside the monarchy. Considering that neither of them was convinced that political liberalism was the best method of governing in this period of intense social conflict, they decided to abolish the parliamentary regime on August, 4, 1936. The Communist Party of Greece, with its new strategy of popular frontism, and a political system that was in crisis and unable to deal with the intensification of labor strikes and demands, posed a real challenge to the Metaxas regime: its reply was repression, since concessions were out of question. The Metaxas regime followed the political paradigm of the other authoritarian experiments of the period, most notably of fascist Italy and Corporatist Portugal. One of his first political initiatives was to abolish the parliamentary mode of governance, establishing himself in the head of the state along with a council of ministers. Parliamentarism was blamed for the succession or national disasters since the founding of the Modern Greek state, while communism was also considered a threat to national unity. In order to make up for the lack of popular support that a mass party would have provided

him with—the National Organization of Youth (EON) was the only mass organization of the regime—Metaxas followed a social policy with some substantial concessions in favor of workers and public servants. Following the example of Fascist Italy, he also established institutions such as the National Labor Service and the Social Insurance Institute. Though his power rested almost entirely upon the army and the monarchy, Metaxas posed as antiestablishment, staffing his ministries with representatives of various corporate interest groups rather than the traditional political elites. Metaxas' efforts at large should be approached as another fascist attempt of the European interwar period, which did not cancel the march of the country to the path of modernity but rather established an authoritarian version of it.

In sum, the triggers for the establishment of the Metaxas dictatorship are located in the post-1931 conjuncture, in which the political system proved unable to articulate effective hegemonic politics within conditions of political and economic instability. The ongoing crisis made political protagonists turn to authoritarian solutions to overcome a political impasse that resulted from the long-term failures of traditional politics.

Greece in the 2010s: Hegemonic Instability, Emergent Fascism, and the Rise of the Left

Post-civil war (1946–1949) Greece scarcely constituted a model democracy. The term itself, a rather empty signifier at the time, became a rallying cry against communism and the Left more broadly. The fall of the Junta in 1974, however, marked the beginning of a new era. That same year a referendum abolished the monarchy—a source of friction and political contestation since its establishment—and a new constitution declared Greece a presidential parliamentary democracy, ushering in the longest period of political stability in its history. In less than a decade, Greece would become the tenth member of the European Community and, in twenty years, a member of the European Economic and Monetary Union as well.

In the 1980s, while other European states entered the neoliberal era, Greece, under the leadership of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), would get a strong taste of social democracy with the expansion of the welfare state, the creation of a national health system, an expansion of the public educational system, large salary and pension increases, and so forth. Before mutating into yet another European

neoliberal party, PASOK largely encapsulated the hopes, but also the fears and reservations, of this small country joining the EU and globalization at large.

PASOK's early, strong anti-American and anticapitalist rhetoric would quickly fade away. By 1985, PASOK would fully adopt what has been designated as *capitalist restructuring* (Sakellaropoulos 2018, 203–228): austerity, privatizations, flexible labor relations, credit-based private consumption. On the social level, an oscillation between Europeanist attitudes, identified as outward-looking and modernization-oriented, and anti-Europeanism, namely reluctance toward political and economic union with Europe, understood as introversion, was largely painted as a dichotomy between forward-looking and socially dynamic groups, most often identified with intellectuals, diaspora business, and export capital, and a culture identified with the "underdog" rural and lower middle classes (Mouzelis 1995, 20–21). Yet, if that was the case during the nineteen-eighties, by the end of the century, identification with the European project—at least by the bourgeoisie and the new petit-bourgeois class—was almost complete.

The divide between an "introverted" underdog culture and a modernist culture oriented toward the Eurozone would be explicitly employed by both PASOK and New Democracy, the self-fashioned center-left and center-right, respectively, that dominated the Greek political scene during the *metapolitefsi*, in order to legitimize technocracy, depoliticization, economic liberalization, and liberal individualism. Europeanism was elevated into a unifying national dogma and a hegemonic ideology designed to achieve an effective political alliance across classes. During the subsequent economic crisis, this same ideological device would be employed again to delegitimize any expressions of social and political discontent as "populist" and even unpatriotic.

In fact, a breach in the centrist neoliberal consensus across the sociopolitical landscape would soon take place. The neoliberal turn that was almost completed in preparation for the country's membership in the Eurozone in 2002 had led to great social deficits and to a series of large-scale mobilizations, including two general strikes in the spring of 2001 against the government's plans to reform the pension system. The establishment had serious reasons to fear mass politics and collective action (Papadatos-Anagnostopoulos 2018; Vradis and Dalakoglou 2011).

At this point, it was no accident that civil society took center stage as a pacifying mechanism in hegemonic Europeanist discourse. In a speech to the Greek parliament on the 2001 budget, Costas Simitis—the leader of the PASOK "modernizers" and Prime Minister for two consecutive terms between 1996 and 2004—echoed Margaret Thatcher's famous statement that "there is no such thing as society," by suggesting that politics is not shaped by collective social subjects but rather by the individual citizens who compose civil society (Spourdalakis and Tassis 2009, 503). Conceived in Tocqueville's terms as a specific type of intermediate structure of voluntary organizations and associations located between primary relations, like the family and the state, civil society was primarily viewed as a mechanism that could insulate the state from mass politics, to "discourage thoughts of revolution" (de Tocqueville 1988, 523).

Revolution was in the air, however, as the 2008 insurrection following the murder of Alexis Grigoropoulos suggested. A precursor of the *Aganaktismenoi* movement and the mass mobilizations that followed, the protests, riots, and university occupations that spread across the country, targeted much more than the police who had been held responsible for Grigoropoulos's death. A statement in the Greek anarchist magazine *Flesh Machine* evaluated the situation as follows: "This revolt was, in fact, a rebellion against property and alienation. A revolt of the gift against the sovereignty of money. An insurrection of anarchy, of use value against the democracy of exchange value. A spontaneous rising of collective freedom against the rationality of individual discipline" (Holloway 2015). The uprising was led by anarchist and leftist groups, but it drew people from all walks of life into the streets. A widespread feeling of frustration stemming from rising unemployment, state securitization and repression, and the prospect of an altogether bleak future, especially among the younger generations, was pervasive. The balance between neoliberalism and democracy was further tilted during the subsequent memorandum era when the state took up a new hegemonic role: it devalued the cost of labor and tightened control over it, redistributed wealth in the interests of big capital, and increasingly developed into a police state where protests were effectively suppressed before they could evolve into insurrections and revolts like the one that shook the country in 2008.

The Economic Adjustment Program for Greece, the first in a series of three bailout packages or "memoranda of understanding," as they are also known, was signed in May 2010, inaugurating a two-year period of insurrectional politics and social unrest including mass protests, organized civil disobedience actions, public sit-ins, and nationwide strikes. In the process—from residents months-long clash with the police in the spring of 2011 over the government's decision to build a landfill in a small town south of Keratea, to the establishment of Athens' central Syntagma Square as emblematic of the *Indignados*-inspired *Αγανακτισμένοι* movement during the summer of the same year, to the publishing of bootleg news proclaiming that "the revolution will not be televised" during the summer of 2013 in defiance of the shutdown of the state broadcaster, ERT—the resistance movement was reshaping old political identities and giving rise to new ones. While unions, the extra-parliamentary and, to some extent, the parliamentary Left and anarchist groups had important roles to play, this movement—like other movements around the world in the past decade or so—defied conventional understandings of political organization and collective action.

The uprising of 2008 constituted a turning point for Syriza, the Coalition of the Radical Left; it was catapulted from 4.6% of the vote in the 2009 legislative election to just under 27% in the second general elections of May 2012, and then to control of the government with 36.3% of the vote in January 2015. Breaking with the Eurocommunist tradition of Synaspismos, the largest party of the coalition and its "Modernizing Wing," Syriza largely stood with revolutionary youth in condemning police brutality and the neoliberal agenda of the government. The bulk of far-left organizations in the midst the coalition appeared to undergo a certain radicalization with anti-Europeanist and socialist voices being more clearly heard. The generation of Syriza, formed through the alter-globalization movement and the mass demonstrations in Genova, but also at the World and European Social Forums, supported the "Squares Movement," despite not taking a leading role. The popular assemblies and self-organized initiatives remained at the core of the movement's organization, whose members experimented with direct democracy, promoted collective efficacy, and engaged people of diverse political backgrounds and experiences (Papadatos-Anagnostopoulos 2018).

Striking a delicate balance between street and parliamentary politics, Syriza rode the wave of popular discontent (Sheehan 2016). Its polling numbers soared as soon as Syriza articulated an "anti-austerity government of the Left" narrative while reaching out to all the left parties and the dissident elements of PASOK (Kouvelakis 2015). Following the 2012 elections, however, the coalition adopted a centralized form of organization and assumed the traditional structures of old political parties while abandoning democratic processes internally. Built into a "*parti d'adherents* rather than a *parti de militants*" (Kouvelakis 2015), Syriza, upon its rise in the government, did not develop organizational links with networks or associations of social agents who could integrally shape and support the government's actions. The party was reduced to "a speech making device that supports the government" and "people's mobilization [was transformed] from a generator of real popular power and leverage against the elites' hostility into traditional forms of demonstration" (Karitzis 2017), changes upon which the government would rely to push its program forward.

The political crisis and the hegemonic instability of the old bourgeois regime created a favorable conjuncture of political circumstances for the rise of the Left but also for the emergence of fascism. Closely associated with the crisis of party representation, as Poulantzas (1979) explains, fascism arises in correspondence to a radicalization of bourgeois parties, in which an effort to continue or restore political leadership results in hardening their grip on the state and movement in the direction of the exceptional state. The almost meteoric rise of Golden Dawn, the neo-Nazi party which received 440,000 votes in the parliamentary elections of 2012—up from only 23,000 votes four years earlier—should be understood in this context. A climate of xenophobia built in response to a surge of immigration, nationalism, and securitization that was systematically cultivated by the government and the media gave rise to extreme-right tendencies which Golden Dawn managed to consolidate.

Not a pariah party, Golden Dawn had, at the early stages of its existence, become acquainted with the structures of the deep state and cultivated close relations with the police and the military as well as the judiciary and other elements of the Greek state (Psarras 2010). In addition to occupying positions within the state, the group engaged in grassroots politics and organization. They established, for example, a "Youth Front" in the 1990s (an echo of Metaxas' National Youth organization [EON]) and *Antepithessi* (Counterattack), a magazine directed at a wider youth

audience. Later, in the midst of the economic crisis and within a framework of militant direct action, Golden Dawn would attempt to create strongholds in various neighborhoods in the center of Athens, for example, Agios Panteleimonas, and to establish "people's committees" that would directly take up the issue of "immigrant criminality". Pogroms and violent attacks, mostly targeting foreigners, became a staple of Golden Dawn's "direct action."

Food and clothes distribution events, and a blood donation campaign for Greeks only, were highly publicized by the media and instrumentally employed to show that the party was actively working to fill the social void created by previous governments. Posing as anti-establishment, Golden Dawn would eventually escalate its violent tactics to take on what they considered to be the ultimate enemies of the nation: communism and antifascism. After murdering Shehzad Luqman, a young Pakistani immigrant, in January of 2013, the following September fifty black-shirted Golden Dawn thugs armed with crowbars and bats lashed out at Communist Party members, seriously injuring nine of them. Later that month, the antifascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas was ambushed and stabbed to death.

Conclusion

In his comparative analysis of interwar Italy, Spain, and Romania, Dylan Riley (2019) argues that associational politics—most often understood as a sign of robust democracy—facilitated the emergence of fascism in the absence of strong political organizations and hegemonic politics. Similarly, the Metaxas authoritarian regime, while largely relying on the traditional institutions of family, church, and monarchy, attempted to build mass organizations in place of representative politics in an effort to connect the nation with the state. At the same time, anticommunism was offered as a unifying ideological narrative at a time when the trade union movement, alongside a growing Communist party threatened the establishment with another counter-hegemonic project. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, eight decades later, new political actors strive to

establish themselves and offer a counter-hegemonic project to the conjunctural crisis of hegemony that has emerged following two global financial crises.

The collapse of the parliament and the rise of Ioannis Metaxas in the interwar period resulted from the inability of the two bourgeois parties to develop a hegemonic policy that would effectively integrate the other classes. In the memoranda era, the imminent collapse of the political system led to the emergence of Syriza as a central political player in the country's affairs. At the heart of these two different political events is the different political background of the actors contesting the status quo of the two periods, which should be interpreted both in terms of the development of civil society and its effects on political elites. Metaxas was the elites' option to manage the political crisis. Prior to abolishing the parliament, he was appointed Prime Minister by the ruling parties, having also the backing of the king. Since he did not have the support of a mass movement, Metaxas attempted to manufacture popular support with the help of authoritarian institutions of mass participation. The emergence of a new competitive, albeit limited, communist movement that challenged the hegemony of the bourgeois political system called for counter mass politics. On the other side, Syriza emerged in the context of a two-year period, between 2010 and 2012, of mass mobilizations which gave rise to movements such as that of the Indignants, *Αγανακτισμένοι,* which crystalized at the central political level and led to the electoral advances of Syriza.

It is the case that we might be on the verge of new forms of political consciousness, the result of a new revival of civil society, in Greece and beyond. Less optimistic views merely detect a "general political impotence" in the European resistance movement which "looks more like a delaying tactic than the bearer of a genuine political alternative" (Badiou 2013, 44). It is unclear whether these emergent forms of political consciousness will be able to take more concrete shape and structure or provide genuine political alternatives. The meteoric rise, and equally swift fall, of parties like Podemos and Syriza may serve as an alarm about the possibilities of yet another civil society revival, with authoritarian characteristics this time.

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Fig. 5.1 Street art depicting Viktor Orbán (2019)

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CHAPTER 5

The State of Capitalism and the Rise of the Right in the 1930s and Today: Hungary as a Case Study

Zoltán Pogátsa

As Žižek (2014) attributes to Walter Benjamin, behind the rise of the Right is always the failure of the Left.[1] What connects the rise of the extreme Right in the 1930s with today is the inability of the political Left to benefit from these two crises of capitalism. The Great Depression was the deepest crisis of capitalism thus far. The political Left (both moderate and radical) was famously inept at exploiting the crisis, opening up the opportunity for the military Keynesianism of the extreme Right to gain popularity by providing a fleeting and illusory solution to economic concerns, which lead to disaster. The neoliberalization of the Left in the 1980s once again opened the door for a crisis of capitalism after 2008, at the same time discrediting the Left itself in the eyes of voters. The resultant inequality and loss of security provided fuel not for the shunned

[1]See also Žižek, Slavoj. "The Palestine Question." https://www.lacan.com/essays/?page_id=261.

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_5

Left, but for the nationalistic demagogy of the radical Right. This chapter examines how the political Left has failed to popularize its own reading of the nature of capitalism, thereby failing to mobilize and giving way to the Right both times. I will use Hungary as a case study (Fig. 5.1).

By the end of the Second World War, Hungary's slide into far-Right politics had left the country in ruins. The civilian population suffered tragically. Hungary, allied with the Axis powers from 1940 on, was one of the countries hardest hit by the Holocaust: around 655,000 Hungarian citizens of Jewish origin perished. Some 300,000 soldiers also died in a disastrous war fought alongside Nazi Germany.

How did the politics of Hungary in the 1930s come to this? Historian Krisztián Ungváry (2013) attributes the rise of the Hungarian far Right to the enormous economic disparities prevalent in the first half of the twentieth century. Hungary, with a population of about 8.6 million at the time, was said to be a country of "three million beggars," with a large rural population that had essentially no property and survived by working on the lands of others. Then there was the small peasantry, with their tiny landholdings: 60–80% of the population lived at or below the subsistence level, with the bottom 81% drawing only 44% of the income, and the top 0.6% drawing 20% (Ungváry 2013, 120–121). These income disparities were large even by comparison with high levels of inequality in the region.

Most of the urban population was concentrated in the capital, Budapest, which grew to around two million, a gigantic head on the body of a small country which had lost two-thirds of its territory after the First World War. Capitalism was thus concentrated in Budapest and was rather rare in the rural areas. A small but powerful capitalist elite owned much of the wealth in the country, concentrated mostly in the capital.

As Ungváry documents, a lack of social policy meant that poverty, joblessness or old age really meant unmitigated misery. It is not ahistorical to point out the absence of social policy in the Hungary of the twenties and thirties; while Germany had enacted a welfare state since Bismarck, and even neighboring Czechoslovakia had a decent level of social protection.

These enormous disparities were bound to cause social tensions. However, as a consequence of the limited presence of the political Left, the tensions were mostly not articulated in class terms. This was due partly to the actions of the Left itself, and partly to the authoritarian nature of Admiral Horthy's Right-wing regime (1920–1944). On the one hand, the political Left in Hungary had made an ill-fated entrée into the twentieth century with the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919. This caused bloodshed and repression to be associated with the political Left up until

today. It also led to the Communists being outlawed during the Horthy regime. Another significant event was the so-called Bethlen-Peyer Pact of 1921, between the Prime Minister and the chairman of the Social Democratic Party. This legalized the Social Democratic Party, but limited their parliamentary seats to 24, regardless of their election results. The Social Democrats agreed not to organize among public sector employees, railway workers, and postal workers. Trade unions were allowed, but they were not allowed to be political. The agreement was meant to be kept secret, but was later published.

As a consequence of these developments, the political Left in Hungary was constrained in the 1930s. Class-based narratives of socioeconomic conflicts remained very restricted in comparison with ethnicist-racist narratives. For historical reasons, the development of capitalism, urbanization, and the emergence of the bourgeoisie coincided in the Austro-Hungarian lands with the influx of Eastern Ashkenazi Jews in the second half of the nineteenth century. Many of them became secular or half secular, while some converted to Christianity. Yet for the most part they were still seen as Jewish by their compatriots. The middle classes of Prague, Vienna, and Budapest were largely of Jewish origin. Ungvári reminds us that around the turn of the century some 7% of the population of Hungary were of Jewish origin, a significantly larger proportion than anywhere in Western Europe. They made up around a fifth of the capital city, Budapest. Their presence in urban occupations related to modernity was even higher. Ungvári illustrates this with a multitude of figures; for example, 59% of doctors, 61% of lawyers, and 48% of journalists, 54% of traders and 38% of engineers were of Jewish origin in 2010 (Ungváry 2013, 20–28). In 1930, 46% of corporations and 78.9% of commercial enterprises had Jewish owners. 85% of top bankers were estimated to be Jewish (Ungváry 2013, 43). The capitalist industrial and financial elite were therefore also portrayed by ethnicist political forces as "Jewish," rather than "the capitalist class."

In the absence of a rational, class-based narratives, public discourse in Hungary in the 1930s came to be dominated by ethnicist-racist discourse, which depicted class conflicts as an ethnic or even racial confrontation. More and more political parties sprung up with the "racial justice" agenda; the program of stripping Jews of their jobs, titles, and assets; and handing these over to "hard working majority Hungarians." In this discursive milieu, it is not surprising that this is exactly what happened during the Holocaust: the titles, assets, and positions of those who

had been deported were taken over by individuals in their environment. The absence of a serious class-based narrative led to a human tragedy of unique proportions, which also claimed the lives of a great many Left-wing leaders.

The Social Democratic Left and the Great Depression

The Great Depression of the 1930s made it clear that crises were an integral part of the economic system. Previously, neoclassical economic orthodoxy asserted that capitalism had self-healing properties: in case of a crisis, prices would adjust downwards, extra capacities would be eliminated, and output and employment would return to their previous levels. After long years of depression, however, the promised recovery was not forthcoming. The emergence of Keynesian economics after the publication of the General Theory (Keynes 2007 [1936]) provided one explanation as to why this was the case. Marxian economists, of course, claimed that even Keynesian demand management would not be enough, as there was a long-term trend of self-destruction in capitalism through the declining profit rate.

It would be logical to assume that this massive crisis of capitalism would benefit its principal critics, the political Left. However, this happened in only a handful of countries. The most successful of these were Scandinavian societies, where political representatives of the trade union movement broke through in democratic circumstances and began their political domination that would last throughout the twentieth century. The Saltsjöbaden Agreement of 1938 in Sweden was the symbolic milestone in the construction of the Scandinavian model that successfully coupled social justice with freedom.

Other countries were not so fortunate. The collapse of the Weimar Republic in Germany brought with it the rise of Hitler and the Nazi party, which in turn led to the outright banning of Communists, Social Democrats, and trade unions. The extreme Right offered not only an alleged explanation of the crisis with its racist theories, but a sense of identity (the *nation*) in a very unstable world, as well as jobs and income through what amounted to military Keynesianism in the form of armaments building in preparation for the coming war. The end result was the Second World War and the Holocaust. Similar developments took place in Italy, Japan, Poland, Hungary, Spain, and a long list of other countries.

In fact, the general rule was that it was the extreme Right rather than the political Left that benefited from the economic crisis of the 1930s.

After the war, the Left finally had its chance to implement the welfare state model throughout Europe. Germany returned to its Bismarckian heritage with the social market economy model, which lead to the German economic miracle. The welfare state in France created the "three glorious decades." The British welfare state, initiated by Clement Attlee, led to the British "never having had it so good." The Italian welfare state led to "il sorpasso," the economic overtaking of Britain, as well as lessening North-South disparities in this deeply divided land. All in all, the decades of Keynesian demand management and economic redistribution lead to decades of full employment, high growth without indebtedness, well-functioning democracies, and social justice.

That all changed with the rise of neoliberalism. The paradox of Social Democracy is that in various ways it is self-defeating. On the one hand, it helps reduce class differences and create a strong middle class, which will no longer be interested in redistributive policies. Middle-class people tend to explain their prosperity by their own talent and hard work and are inclined to support the reduction of the tax burden, and thereby undermine redistributive solidarity. On the other hand, the participation of the Social Democratic parties and the trade unions in democratic capitalist politics means that the elites of these organizations become part of the national elite. They become well-paid functionaries, well connected, wealthy, influential, and sometimes even celebrated. Their upper-middle-class living standards will be more aligned with that of the liberal upper middle class than that of the workers and lower-middle-class strata that they are meant to represent. Over time, they will be more inclined toward political battles involving issues of recognition rather than issues of redistribution.

How Neoliberalism Conquered the Left

Neoliberalism is a political movement that aims to roll back the welfare state based on the rhetorical claim that it obstructs the efficient functioning of markets (Mirowski 2014; Mirowski and Plehwe 2009; Streeck 2014; Tooze 2018; Tribe 2009; Davies 2014; Duménil and Lévy 2004, 2011). In the long run, it benefits the upper class by eliminating redistribution, deregulating markets, and creating the conditions for state capture by oligarchs and corporations.

Neoliberalism as a political movement had been started at the Mont Pelerin meeting of 1947 by a handful of Austrian and neoclassical economists such as Hayek and Friedman, who felt they were in a tiny minority in a world dominated by Keynesian economic thinking. Its first political successes were Pinochet's extreme Right-wing military junta in Chile (Klein 2007) (a great irony, given the neoliberal movement's constant reference to economic freedom being a guarantee for political freedom), as well as center-right victories in the UK and the United States with Thatcher and Reagan. However, the movement soon captured the political Left as well. Mitterrand's famous U-turn in 1982 signaled the beginning of this process. It was then ideologized by Anthony Gidden's *Third Way* (1999) in the eighties, and brought to power by Tony Blair, Gerhard Schröder, Bill Clinton, Francois Jospin, and many others.

The massive problem with the neoliberalized Left is that it effectively abandoned the core principles that had made postwar Social Democracy effective in creating a just society and a well-functioning political democracy. Instead of turning back the neoliberal revolution, it adapted to it, which left oligarchs and corporations in control of the media and the political process through campaign financing. Lower classes are still denied opportunity, while the super-rich prosper (Piketty 2014).

Neoliberalism brought with it the extreme dominance of neoclassical economics over all other economic schools. Keynesianism was deemed passé. Demand management, high rates of redistribution, universal wage bargaining and minimum wage policies were abandoned. In their place came deregulation, free trade, fiscal conservatisms and austerity, inflation targeting ("the Great Moderation"), tax competition, offshore finance, independent central banks and fiscal councils (i.e., the depoliticization of economic policy), and general convertibility (which lead to international investors become a second constituency for politicians [Streeck 2014]).

In 2008, these neoliberal policies clearly came to a crisis. Deregulation led to extreme financialization, industrial concentration, and often outright fraud. Large banks in the United States and the EU had to be bailed out, disguised as bailing out states in the latter case (Tooze 2018). It became clear that capitalism had been surviving on borrowed time, through the increasing indebtedness of households, firms, states, and the financial sector. Social inequalities had reached unbearable levels. At the same time, environmental devastation and climate change came to be recognized by the majority.

Again, it would seem logical that the political Left, traditionally the primary critics of capitalism, should have benefited from this crisis. However, as developments across the globe indicate, this was not to be. As in the crisis of the Great Depression in the 1930s, the beneficiaries were not left-wing political forces, but the political Right. The institutionalized, mainstream left-wing political parties had slipped too far under the influence of the liberal upper middle class culturally and had become dependent on the financial and corporate oligarchy for their campaign financing. More radical left-wing groups were not able to replace them due to the cultural hegemony (Gramsci 1992) created by mass media, as well as the lack of financial resources.

Instead, socioeconomic tensions once again became ethnicized, and the world witnessed the return of xenophobia, racism, nationalism, and the dominance of radical Right-wing political forces. The antithesis to neoliberalism was not a culturally open social democracy, but ethnotraditionalism, which combined antiestablishment sentiment with traditionalist values.

Hungary After the 1989 Political Transition

Hungary was one of the key countries in the push for democratization in the former Soviet Bloc. The first free elections were held in 1990. A diversity of political forces appeared. The former Communist Party broke into a Socialist and a Communist wing. The former achieved about a tenth of the popular vote, while the latter failed to make it into Parliament.

Surveys from these times, and continuously since then, tell us that Hungarians took for granted that the welfare state-like aspects of state socialism (free and general education, healthcare, pensions, etc.) were a civilizational achievement and would not be rolled back. Rather than unfettered capitalism, voters wanted to open up politically from a one-party system, political repression, closed borders, and the presence of Soviet forces to a political democracy with freedom of the press, open borders, and full sovereignty. There has also been constant popular support for European integration.

Post-transition governments both Left and Right, however, did not respect these popular sentiments. Sadly, the neoliberalized Left here is at least as much at fault as the Right. The first right-wing coalition (1990–1994) even introduced the German social market economy model into

the Hungarian constitution, with elections for trade unions, as well as wide-spread wage bargaining.

In 1994, however, Socialist Prime Minister Gyula Horn signed a coalition agreement with the Liberals even though he had a clear majority. The main reason for this was that Socialists were still trying to distance themselves from their Communist past. Long decades of repressive Soviet-style state socialism also made the left-wing label unpopular both in Eastern Europe, even though, as it has already been mentioned, actual left-wing content and ideas remained popular. A coalition with a party made up of former dissidents would serve to prove to the West that they were not about to roll back democracy.

Horn's Socialists then went full speed ahead with an opaque privatization, selling state assets at depressed prices to foreign investors. An internal challenge by his market fundamentalist finance minister caused infighting and neglect of economic policy. Macroeconomic instability led Horn in 1995 to bring in another market fundamentalist finance minister, this time a more loyal one, who introduced a harsh austerity package that included severe cuts to welfare and education. Hungary had to turn to the IMF to avoid collapse. Bargaining with the trade unions was suspended even prior to the introduction of austerity, and they were not consulted about the package itself. Trade unions MPs were gradually squeezed out of the Socialist Party, causing deep suspicion that lasts until today.

Horn also conspired in a corruption scheme to financially aid the ailing Postabank from the state coffers, using the pension system run by the trade unions as middlemen. The scheme was exposed by the press, leading to a huge loss of face for the trade unions, which then allowed the succeeding right-wing government to close down altogether the union-managed self-governing pension and social security systems.

The neoliberal international environment very much encouraged the Socialists to reform themselves into market-friendly politicians. Had the political transition in Eastern Europe happened in the 1950s or 1960s, former Communists would probably have remodeled themselves into principled old school social democrats, advocating a strong welfare state. In fact, there was even a popular theory at the time that advocated systemic convergence: Eastern Bloc socialist states such as Hungary would gradually open up and democratize, while Western welfare states would gradually introduce community ownership (e.g., Swedish workers' ownership funds). This convergence never materialized. Instead, the Western Left came to be led by neoliberalized leaders at the time the Soviet Union

collapsed. Eastern European former Communists quickly adapted to the situation by advocating a partnership with capital.

The peak of the neoliberal Left in Hungary arrived with the Prime Ministership of the Socialist Ferenc Gyurcsány between 2004 and 2009. A self-professed fan of New Labour, Gyurcsány organized conferences in Budapest with Giddens and other Third Way ideologues. Rather than increasing redistributive expenditure on crucial issues such as education and health care to (at least) EU average levels, he further decreased these as a percentage of GDP. As a consequence of his policies, Hungary became the least socially mobile society in the European Union according to a study by Eurofound (2017). The enormous selectivity in the state healthcare and educational sectors meant that social mobility effectively froze.

How can a nominally socialist government govern in such an antisocial way? The key to explaining this is to see how class-based narratives had been effectively disqualified from political discourse in Eastern Europe (Éber and Gagyi 2015), as alleged legacies of a Communist past. While class-based narratives are a regular part of Western European or US political debates, in Eastern Europe they had been banished. Social stratification was portrayed as not being relational, as in class-based narratives, but rather as a consequence of individual effort which resulted in social "layers." Even the nominal Left accepted this, which lead it to disregard policies that could have alleviated class differences. The consequence was the end of social mobility.

On top of social injustice, Gyurcsány performed what the Economist called the "worst mismanagement of any post-Socialist economy." He attempted to counterbalance his initial years of record budget deficits with a sudden shift to austerity, which subsequently brought the economy to a halt. He then tried to counterbalance austerity by unleashing foreign currency-based lending, which led to a massive crisis involving hundreds of thousands of households once the exchange rate of the Hungarian Forint collapsed as a consequence of his economic policies (Király 2019). This happened in 2008, when foreign investors who were apprehensive after the collapse of Lehman Brothers and Dubai's sovereign wealth fund, turned their attention to Hungary, where the debt/GDP ratio had been rising rapidly. The exchange rate collapsed, the refinancing rate went through the roof, and Hungary would have been the first EU state ever to go bankrupt, had it not been for a massive IMF loan amounting to 20% of GDP. The net real value of the average wage decreased, while

the value of the minimum wage was inflated away and dropped far below the subsistence minimum, resulting in the rapid increase of an underclass which came to encompass some four out of ten Hungarians.

Social injustice, economic mismanagement, and an infamous leaked "lie speech" in which Gyurcsány declared to his parliamentary group that they had been "lying day and night," employing "hundreds of tricks to keep the country afloat," and "not having the faintest idea" what to do with an economy they had "fucked up big time," lead to enraged protests and about one and a half million voters deserting the Socialist Party. Their coalition partners, the Liberals, disappeared altogether. The position of the Left in Hungary became extremely precarious. Their reputation had become tainted not only by long decades of repression and subservience to the Soviet Union, but ironically also by its direct opposite in economic terms, long years of neoliberal misgovernance.

At the 2010 polls, Hungarians elected Viktor Orbán as their Prime Minister. He collected around 2.7 million votes, not significantly more than earlier or later. He then went on to win two more parliamentary terms with similar results, while the Left never recovered. Hungary has around 8 million voters. Thus, it is clear that Orbán's success can be explained by the historic collapse of the Left rather than any special fascination of Hungarian electorate with Orbán's right-wing extremist politics.

Orbán's Hungary: Back to the Thirties

Viktor Orbán's politics hark back to the 1930s. He uses xenophobic propaganda to rally votes against immigrants. He claims to be fighting a "freedom fight" against alleged domination by Brussels, as well as "German economic colonization." He put posters in the streets of Budapest suggesting that George Soros was plotting against Hungarians, who must come together to protect themselves. His speeches reflect similar conspiracy theories. His international alliances include nationalist leaders such as Salvini, Berlusconi, Erdogan, Putin, Kaczynski, Gruevski, Vucic, Trump, and Netanyahu.

The antisemitic element is clearly part of the anti-Soros rhetoric. Xenophobia is present in his description of refugees, whom he calls "economic migrants." He has repeatedly made policy speeches that demonstrate that he does not believe the Roma to be part of the Hungarian nation. Most Roma belong to the bottom two income deciles of Hungarian society,

far below the average living standards of the non-Roma. The underfinancing of education and health care, resulting in enormous internal disparities in the quality of service, denies the Roma opportunities for social mobility. Thus, ethnicist-racist narratives are once again dominant in Hungary, while class-based narratives are almost absent. Parliamentary political forces do not use class-based rhetoric, which is restricted to New Left intellectual groups and esoteric university faculties. Parliamentary democracy is much restricted in the style of a managed democracy.

Orbán's liberal critics, such as Ágnes Heller, have tended to put these developments down to Orbán's person. They have portrayed Orbán's Fidesz party as the Galapagos Islands of the Western Right, which they saw as centrist and moderate like Angela Merkel. Time, however, proved them wrong. The Western Right had only turned moderate temporarily as a response to social democratic domination after the Second World War. Once the Left defeated itself with their neoliberalized Third Way politics, the Right could return to its original creed: nationalism, patriarchy, homophobia, etc. Brexit, the election of Donald Trump, the Liga in Italy, as well as Orbán's previously mentioned allies demonstrate this.

Viktor Orbán was not a meteorite who fell one day from the sky to an otherwise faultless Hungarian political scene. His share of votes in the electorate is not significantly higher than that of the political Right elsewhere. His dominance can best be explained by the failure of the Left, just as the Frankfurt School had diagnosed during earlier age, the thirties.

The political Right offers voters a sense of community: that of the *nation*. It emits a feeling of security by promising to preserve the world "as it once was": with cultures and nations clearly apart, with whites in supremacy over others, men in control over women, and heterosexuality as the unchallenged norm. All of these are questions of identity and recognition, to which the liberal half of the elite is happy to play the counterparty as long as questions of redistribution are not mentioned (Honneth and Fraser 2004).

The political Left used to offer a different sense of community: that of the People. Through redistribution, it ensured that all would feel a sense of support from the community: the poor, economically exploited women, peripheralized minorities, etc. Nothing summarizes this better than the Nordic concept of the *Folkhemmet*—the Home of the People. Through neoliberalization in the eighties and nineties, the social democratic mainstream gave up this alternative offer of community. It came to be dominated by upper-middle-class quasi-liberal elites, who would steer

clear of questions of redistribution, and would concentrate instead on issues of identity. As a consequence, they abandoned the representation of the lower classes to the extreme Right. Since culturally many in the lower classes are right-wing (nationalist, patriarchal, xenophobic, homophobic, etc.) by default, as a consequence of historical heritage, the abandonment of a class-based narrative by the Left opened up the terrain for massive gains by the extreme Right (Berman 2006).

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Fig. 6.1 Ruin with a View, Strait of Messina. Photo by Carmelo Buscema (2019)

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CHAPTER 6

The New Great Transformation: The Origins of Neo-Populism in Light of Systemic Cycles of Accumulation

Carmelo Buscema

Where are we now? Many signs indicate that we are living in times of crisis. The clearest examples are the heterogeneous and diffuse crashes and emergencies that debuted in the USA with the subprime mortgage crisis and the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers in 2007–2008; that continued in the European Union in the form of the sovereign debt crisis, mainly suffered by the disdainfully-termed "PIIGS" (namely Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece, and Spain) in 2009; and that subsequently spread out in a much larger cycle of social protests, in some cases very violent, typified by their marked popular and transnational character. Three acts in a performance of crisis (Fig. 6.1).

Within this last cycle—the third act—it is crucial to distinguish two moments. First, the role played by that long succession of anti-government remonstrations, rebellions, and sometimes civil wars that spread across North Africa and the Middle East 2010–2011, euphemistically called the "Arab Spring," was quasi-propitiatory. This antagonistic

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_6

cycle soon reached its peak with a worldwide diffusion of entwined heterogeneous movements like the Indignados, Tahrir Square, Occupy Wall Street, and their many emulators. This first expression of massive discontent was transversal with respect to states' borders and social groups ("We are the 99%!"), productive of a great variety of new forms, geometries, and instruments of social conflict, as well as progressive in terms of its main claims.

Second, this heterogeneous set of subjects and movements faced defeat and subsequent implosion, furthered by a climate of public fear in the season of massive terrorism between 2015 and 2017—which, from the most tragic fronts of the world, reached the heart of the Western society—as well as by the instrumental use of security requests by governments to better dominate social conflict (Buscema 2019). That defeat gave way in many regions to an almost complete inversion/perversion of the predominant characteristics of the movements, the first sociopolitical expressions of popular discontent with the effects of crisis.

The last segment of this arc has seen the degeneration of that popular and transnational substance of antagonism into the deforming and deceptive mask of neo-populism and the claustrophobic and vacuous slogans of "international" "neo-sovereignism" ("America first!", "Prima gli italiani!", etc.). Examples of this neo-sovereignism will be familiar: the election of Trump, Brexit, the "Visegrad Consensus"; the spread of claims against social democratic parties, regular constitutional rules and procedures, and legitimate transnational institutions; the diffusion and ascent of a new, aggressive, and sometimes explicitly racist Right, and of a cultural climate hostile to immigrants, the poor, gender minorities, progressive intellectuals, and others. While this degeneration took advantage of an autonomous dynamic of political frustration that took hold among activists and common people once the first wave of protests were defeated, as well as a "drive-belt" effect in the emotive reaction to the terrorist attacks, this degeneration is also inexplicable without referring to the conscious and active political investment of cognitive and material resources that right and far-right movements have unscrupulously made. For they have, as is their political tradition, countered any chance of radical reforms and opportunistically amplified their crusades to divert social struggles' objectives toward weak and wrong targets.

Thus, three acts—namely the originating subprime crisis, the sovereign debt crisis, and the longer wave of positive and negative expressions of people's malaise and frustration—have taken myriad forms, produced varied effects, triggered diverse dynamics, and nurtured a range of processes, which are still shaping the global structure of human society.

Karl Polanyi wrote that "the idea of a self-adjusting market implied a stark utopia" and that it was precisely its application by liberal forces that led to the disasters of the first half of the twentieth century. A social structure ruled by that utopia simply could not exist for any length of time without annihilating the human and natural substance of society; it would have physically destroyed humanity and transformed its surroundings into a wilderness. Inevitably, society took measures to protect itself, but whatever measures it took impaired the self-regulation of the market, disorganized industrial life, and thus endangered society in yet another way (Polanyi 1944, 3).

The most general thesis expressed here, constituting the framework of this chapter, is that we are now experiencing a new "great transformation;" one determined, in essence, by the long-term effects of neoliberalism's unfolding across the world since the 1970s. That new great transformation implies both devastating concrete potentialities and, hopefully, inspiring possibilities, whose basic elements, forces, aspects, and advances are already among us.

Such a "background of both reckless optimism and reckless despair" seems to be typical of crucial turning points of history, due to the fact that, as Hannah Arendt (1950, vii) writes, "Progress and Doom are two sides of the same medal; … both are articles of superstition." Within such a scenario, our task is to discover the hidden mechanisms by which all traditional elements of our political and spiritual world were dissolved into a conglomeration where everything seems to have lost specific value, and has become unrecognizable for human comprehension, unusable for human purpose (Arendt 1950, viii). Moreover, our obligation is to contrast the diffuse "irresistible temptation" to "yield to the mere process of disintegration," nurtured by the exasperating sensation that "everything outside it has begun to appear lifeless, bloodless, meaningless, and unreal" (viii).

This chapter moves forward from the conviction that, in order not to be limited in our comprehension of contingent reality by our justifiable hopes and fears, as social scientists we must establish precise enough structures, methods, and criteria for reading social history. We find that

precision in a framework of analysis that takes the world as a system. Furthermore, this chapter is also based upon the intuition that it can be theoretically (and practically) useful to try to understand the origins and development of neo-populism, especially in its neo-sovereignist variations (ones of the main current manifestations and vectors of those hopes and fears), in light of knowledge about the origins of totalitarianism, which represented the darkest expression of the combined effects of the original great transformation analyzed by Polanyi.

The case on which this chapter focuses, in explicit and implicit reference, and not exclusively, is that of the "Italian political laboratory." In particular, it focuses on the phenomenology that gravitates around the governmental "non-alliance" between the MoVimento 5 Stelle (M5S) or "Five Star Movement" and the Lega political party led by Matteo Salvini—recently divided by the "incontinence" of the latter's embarrassing political ambitions. This focus is mostly left implicit, but it is clear that these movements represent an emblematic manifestation of that perversion of the expressions of social discontent generated by the long effects of crisis, a principle defining characteristic of the neo-populist/sovereignist phenomenon.

Crisis of What? World-Systemic Cycles of Accumulation

This analytical program implies the need for locating the events in question while clarifying their historical meaning. Simplifying heterogeneous critical approaches, we can identify two poles in our adopted horizon of analysis.

On the one hand, we have the point of view expressed by David Harvey, according to which we have simply experienced a typical capitalist shock, which certainly represented a difficult adjustment of that contingent configuration called neoliberalism, but definitively did not represent its end! According to Harvey (2010), we are instead exiting "this crisis with a further consolidation and centralization of capitalist class power" (11), the core purpose of the neoliberal project; thus, "there is no evidence that it is dead" (10).

At the opposite extreme of the spectrum lies the much broader focus offered by Michel Serres (2009), according to which we are experiencing the symptoms of a generalized crisis consisting of a radical anthropological transformation. Serres gives an account of an ongoing apocalypse consisting of six "ultra-historical" events, which exploded during the second

half of the past century. These events are so defined because they interrupt regularities characterizing human life since prehistory—or even the beginning of hominid evolution. They expose us to both the opportunity to finally develop the richest essence of humanity, and to the peril of unprecedented disaster.

Between these two extreme polarities, which delimit the scope of critical theories of crisis applied to the present, I will defend the importance of adopting an intermediate approach able to strengthen our interpretation of actual complexity. This means synthesizing the collection and analysis of elements of both order and disorder within the same matrix; articulating an understanding of the present in light of the past, and vice versa; incorporating the elucidation of the local and the global within a shared schema; emphasizing the persistent regularities within which the most shocking upheavals occur, and, at the same time, detecting the advent of innovative elements inside processes of repetition.

An approach of this kind is offered by Giovanni Arrighi's study of "systemic cycles of accumulation," conceived as the world-historical or spatiotemporal dynamic structure in which capitalism has evolved, inscribed within the long durée and the global scale. Pivotal elements of his matrix are the following paired categories: center/periphery, hegemony/domination, innovation/emulation, chaos/order, and material expansion/financial expansion.

In Arrighi's analysis of the world-system's development, the most essential roles are played by the geographically and temporally situated agents of two different, but intertwined, principles of action. On the one hand, we have the agents of *capitalism*, who try to maximize the money they manage by buying and selling virtually everything they can, either through the implementation of activities of material production (M-C-M′, in the classic formula, in which "M" is money and "C" is commodity) or through financial investments (M-M′), depending on which it is contingently more convenient. Throughout the history of the modern world-system, agents of capitalism have taken the form of diasporas and business communities, state-sponsored companies, family enterprises, and transnational corporations.

On the other hand, the quite opposite principle of action distinguished by Arrighi is *territorialism*. Territorialism is enacted by those collective agents that Anthony Giddens calls "bordered power containers." These agents also use money, but for the purpose of reinforcing instruments through which territorialism exercises power. Arrighi paraphrases and

goes far beyond Karl Marx when he extends the essential formula of capitalism's functioning into the realm of territorialism: T-M-T′, in which "T" (territorialism's tools) is substituted for the "commodity", "C" (and money remains "M"). This equation expresses the way power and money dispose themselves within the dimension of internal and international political relations. Territorialism's formula and the logic of capitalism are strongly intertwined dynamics, which interact densely, bringing into being a set of specific mechanisms. Each different point of equilibrium that is historically established within the development of their dialectic has been reached under the leading action of a hegemonic state. From time to time, each of these hegemons represented innovative organizations, able to propose solutions and models perceived as worth emulating by others, and, in this way, became effective in governing each historical systemic cycle of material expansion (M-C). These hegemons were, namely, the Dutch United Provinces, the imperial nation-state of the UK, and then the continental entity represented by the USA—chased by the USSR.

Arrighi borrows from Fernand Braudel the conception of the crucial role played in history by the mechanism of "inversion" between a phase of aggregate material expansion—in which money circulates broadly throughout society buying and producing more and more goods—and a subsequent phase of financial expansion (C-M). The latter phase consists of a diffusion of the preference for liquidity, which activates widely disseminated speculation that, in turn, sustains the financial expansion (M-M′), a shift generally caused by the increase in competition that makes reinvestment in production and commerce less profitable.

These alternating "seasons" can be seen as the "breath" of the world-system, and the second movement (financial expansion) signifies the announcement of the "autumn" of a systemic cycle of accumulation. Within this double movement, the two logics of capitalism and territorialism appear very strongly intertwined. This is due to the fact that the value of money (M-C-M′) must be safeguarded by the well-arranged civil, military, and organizational power of states, which then, in turn, must be continuously fostered. Meanwhile, states' need for money (T-M), especially in times of economic and fiscal crisis and augmented international political competition, favors not only the intensification of the dynamics of financial expansion (C-M′), but also its most speculative tendencies, which, in turn, strengthen, and bring to an end, the crisis of the phase of material expansion from whose deceleration those dynamics and tendencies stem.

At a more general level, such an inversion between the two phases accompanies and facilitates the passage from one hegemonic stage and leading state to another. In the financial phase of each cycle, the bursting of speculative bubbles marks the approximation of the final crisis. Liquidity is attracted by those emerging states best able to channel it toward new productive and organizational horizons, with the purpose of overcoming the limits of the previous stage. It implies the destruction and redistribution of wealth, in material and monetary terms, in view of the "redemption" of the system's capacity to grow, giving way to another phase of material expansion.

In sum, in Arrighi's view, the history of the modern world-system consists of a sequence of cycles—brief stages of order and equilibrium emerge from conditions of chaos—and yet circumstances of chaos, in turn, are continuously reproduced in ever larger forms by the progressive degeneration of those established systems of order. It may seem paradoxical that order stems from chaos through the invention of unique systemic solutions to disorganized situations, whereas chaos derives from order through the diffusion, via emulation, of a successful model of governance, which recreates competition. But in this way, a pendular movement is animated by actors of very different kinds, who perform the opposed but intertwined logics of capitalism and territorialism and who together enact a set of mechanisms inscribed within a complex dynamic structure. Within that structure, the logics of capitalism and territorialism interact to produce always unprecedented mixtures of regular and predictable performances and more or less consequential innovations.

Where Are We *Now*? *When* Are We *Here*?

To orient ourselves we must understand *where* are we *now*, and *when* are we *here*, within the logical/chronological phases of the structured movement according to which the world-system evolves. It is not so easy a task since—as Arrighi notes—the periods of crisis, confusion, and extended conflict are usually longer and more frequent than the phases of order and peaceful expansion.

I suggest that the ongoing crisis is of the kind described by Arrighi as the epiphanic moment of a crucial systemic transition: when the hegemony of a past leading state, in this case the USA, patently reveals its exhausted condition, and a series of heterogeneous, widespread, and escalating conflicts occurs. It is through these conflicts that a new hegemonic

order will be established, led by a new global actor, or sustained by a new balance of international forces. A more radical variant of this statement could consider the current crisis from a more emphatically *located* point of view, as the epiphany of the exhaustion of the entire Western sequence of systemic cycles of accumulation—which has lasted more than half a millennium—and hence the harbinger of a much deeper structural shift of the established points and lines of equilibrium in geopolitics and the geo-economy, through the displacement of the pivotal centers of the world-system toward the international sub-system of East Asia (Arrighi 2007; Robinson 2011).

More specifically, I argue that we should locate ourselves within that particular segment or quadrant of a kind of spiral movement that is recognizable within a dynamic matrix implicit in Arrighi's designs (Arrighi 1994; Arrighi and Silver 1999). That movement proceeds from a condition of manifest chaos into the final collapse, producing ruins of the past systemic order—but from which a new hegemonic stage will start. Such a rush to the crash, according to Arrighi's schema, is the most mature fruit of the longer phase of systemic crisis.

The outcome emerges from a synthesis of three geometric drives: a circle, a pendulum, and a scalar progression. Hence, it is graphically representable as a spiral moving from a hegemonic order to its crash and passing through stages of crisis and increasing and decreasing conditions of chaos, until a new order is settled—along the way, interpolating the different actors, forces, principles, lines of tension, and dialectics, as well as the typical mechanisms and phases discussed above, and here exemplified (Fig. 6.2).

The New Great Transformation and the Farce of Historic Tragedy

This thesis is based on the methodological consideration that the current historical phase is better understood in comparison with the last time that the world-system experienced the collapse of a hegemonic structure, based on a deep and massive penetration of territorialism's and capitalist's forces into the body of global society. In what follows, I explain the comparison between our time and the very heart of the so-called long 1930s of the twentieth century, establishing a link between

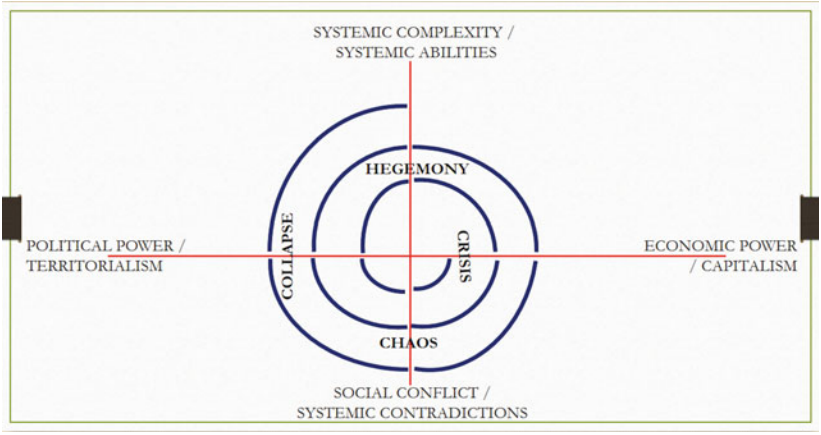


Fig. 6.2 From crisis to collapse

the genesis, sense, and function of the political phenomenon of neo-populism/sovereignism in many Western countries today, and the historical experience of European totalitarianisms.

If such a parallelism may appear at first glance ridiculous, that does not mean that it is nonsensical. After all, we know from Marx that "all the events and personalities of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice …: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce" (Marx 1852). What we discover exploring these parallels is, foremost, that those social dynamics, "events and personalities of great importance" that represent the historical tragedies and traumas from which we come, seem to occur again right now around us in the form of farce. This is not so much because of their different load of violence—whether effectively expressed or simply accumulated in those dangerous social reservoirs of resentment—but rather in view of the awareness that we are supposed to have matured in the meanwhile and that the availability of all sorts of new resources should have made us better prepared to manage the causes of those tragedies.[1]

[1] Unfortunately, the amount of violence effectively expressed today, though differently manifested (Buscema 2019), cannot be considered dissimilar at all in comparison with the long '30s.

Here I will relate again to the Arrighian schema of analysis, as well as to the vicious sociopolitical cycle identified by Polanyi: in order to face the effects of a destructive social dynamic, society soon takes countermeasures "to protect itself," which, in turn, "endanger … society in yet another way" (Polanyi 1944, 4). Take the case of M5S and Lega, and the comparison that can be drawn between this contemporary manifestation of neo-populism/sovereignism and historical totalitarianisms. In both cases, these phenomena are the expression of:

1. the aggravation of conditions of crisis into chaos, which accelerate movement toward systemic collapse;
2. the protagonism of new political actors which—by experimenting with new (and effective) means of political communication and socialization, alongside relatively novel reform proposals—make patent and accelerate the obsolescence of status quo politics, increasing the state of chaos instead of reducing it;
3. the perceived need or opportunity—fostered by some particularly proactive institutional, political, intellectual, and socioeconomic agents—to rearrange the critical relationship between the two logics of territorialism and capitalism in a more authoritarian form; and, finally,
4. the diffusion of the use of such a reactionary pathway in order to maintain or reinvent at least a simulacrum of social order, after crises have undermined important strata of the established system, and after past progressive attempts at reform have been defeated.

This comparison can be further developed in conversation with Hannah Arendt's (1949) classic study of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, which still represents one of the firmest analyses of the historical, sociological, and political meaning of the long 1930s and a useful tool for the comprehension of the present. In particular, Arendt's analysis of totalitarianism provides an explanatory structure for understanding contemporary political phenomena consistent with Arrighi's world-system schema. These approaches share the following characteristics: they refuse to separate micro-and macro-dimensions, as well as national and international levels of social phenomena; they confront together the intertwined dimensions the cultural and material, political and economic spheres of reality; they

see historical mechanisms as results of, and responses to, complex structural contradictions; they emphasize the necessity for a decomposition of the traditional social classes contemplated by Marxism, as well as a more articulated analysis of their political behaviors and functions; and finally, they take a significantly long duration and a global scale as the proper scenario for the interpretation of empirical processes.

In light of this overlap, the first point to underline is that Arendt considered totalitarianism to be the effect of the historical combination of two sets of partially interdependent cultural, sociopolitical, and socioeconomic phenomena: first, the intensified imperialist expansion during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and second, the wave of antisemitism that emerged at the turn of the century. Seen through Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism*, today's anti-immigrant movements can be identified as the farcical and terrible caricature of the tragedy of historical antisemitism; similarly, twentieth-century and twenty-first-century neoliberalism can be seen as an echo of imperialism, and neo-populist/sovereignist organizations can be identified with historical totalitarian movements. Obviously, each of these current phenomena is unique and autonomous; nevertheless, by comparison they appear as homologous, in their dynamic role and functional sense, to those analyzed by Arendt. What elements justify these parallels, and what is their importance for the comprehension of our present condition and the risks we are running?

Bringing together the Arrighian, Polanyian, and Arendtian arguments, we can say that both antisemitism and anti-immigrant nativism represent attempts by certain political forces to redefine the boundaries of the social arena and the terms of its differential inclusion/exclusion (which also shapes the redistribution of monetary and symbolic credits and debits, awards and punishments). According to Arrighi's framework, both antisemitism and anti-immigrant nativism have been used in times of economic and fiscal crisis in order to channel social tensions and political conflicts—exasperated by systemic contradictions—toward questions and targets that, from the point of view of systemic preservation, are more easily managed. This represents an occasion for the governing system to fine-tune new tools of power, organized by traditional and emergent political agents and financially evaluated by agents of capital. If antisemitism was the historical expression of the political organization of public frustration, carried out, in times of economic turbulence, by totalitarian movements against the cultural "rest" (the Jews) of that system structured around the model of the nation-state, within the global architecture of

the *Jus Publicum Europeaum*—then the anti-immigrant doxa deployed by today's neo-populist/sovereignist movements seem to be the expression of the political organization of public frustration (in similar circumstances of economic restructuring) against the demographic "rest" delimited in the attempt to extend the neoliberal project to the entire world, under the terms of the Washington Consensus and the last wave of globalization.

Something analogous connects the very different experiences related to historical imperialism and contemporary neoliberalism. The former was the expression of the political emancipation of the national bourgeoisie and the hegemony of its financial segments, which resulted in an unprecedented political alliance with "the mob" to relaunch the dynamics of accumulation in an expanded radium at the intercontinental scale.[2] It represented the aggressive attempt to solve the crisis of nineteenth-century liberal capitalism, and it exploded in the 1870s Great Depression by literally running away from the contradictions that had caused the crisis, and offering up as exotic geographical alibis those parts of the world not yet colonized, chasing "the panacea of expansion" (Arendt 1949, 151).[3] Similarly, neoliberalism has represented the political affirmation of the interests of the Western transnational bourgeoisie and a new hegemony of its hypertrophic, hyper-interconnected globalized financial sector, which tried to mobilize and channel the emancipation efforts of the lower strata of global society toward a new conception of economic development by universalizing bourgeois mentality through the forging and generalization of the "neo-subject" (Dardot and Laval 2009). As in the case of imperialism, neoliberalism has represented an attempt to escape from the crisis at the end of *Les Trente Glorieuses* (the "Thirty Glorious Years" between 1945 and 1975) by arranging an exit with immaterial alibis. These include not only the electronic/digital sphere and the intellectual

[2] "From now on, the mob, begotten by the monstrous accumulation of capital, accompanied its begetter on those voyages of discovery where nothing was discovered but new possibilities for investment. The owners of superfluous wealth were the only men who could use the superfluous men who came from the four corners of the earth. Together they established the first paradise of parasites whose lifeblood was gold. Imperialism, the product of superfluous money and superfluous men, began its startling career by producing the most superfluous and unreal goods" (Arendt 1949, 151). Such an alliance was based on the fact that "the upper classes knew that the mob was flesh of their flesh and blood of their blood" (107), but it was a very dangerous bet (124).

[3] A Latin term that literally meaning "somewhere else." Here it refers to the strategy normally used to push forward systemic contradictions.

property markets, but also the imposition of that ethereal but compelling axiom according to which everyone, everywhere, all the time—pressed and stimulated by the generalized promise of richness and success, and galvanized by indebtedness—is charged with relaunching capital's development toward new dimensions of accumulation, for which they must act entrepreneurially, putting an economic value on everything. Thus, the neoliberal subject lives in constant pursuit of a chimera.

Despite its rhetorical self-representation, the neoliberalization of the world has not been a peaceful process. It has implied a load of systemic violence—borne by individuals, social classes, communities, territories, and the environment—absolutely comparable to that unleashed by imperialism. The "Chilean 9/11" in 1973, the wars perpetrated to promote neoliberal "democracy," structural adjustment programs based on the requirements of public austerity and social deprivation (first practiced in the periphery of the world-system, and lately increasingly imposed on its center, too)—these are just a few examples of the vast, violent tools recommended by the so-called shock doctrine (Buscema 2014; Harvey 2005; Klein 2007). The disruptive collapse of neoliberalism has produced the same effects previously recognized by Arendt at the time of the implosion of the four pillar institutions of "19th-century civilization" (Polanyi 1944, 3). This time, that collapse has unfolded at a more global scale: with more widespread individualization, isolation, alienation; a more extensive downgrading/de-classing of individuals from all classes, alongside the dissolution of the social structures typical of Western Fordism/Keynesianism, as well as those mixed social assets that resulted from decolonization in many other parts of the world; and finally, with the amassing of a larger, more heterogeneous stratum of "the mob," especially in Western countries.

This latter process has occurred alongside the growth of a new, larger popular stratum, nurtured by the augmented propensity to migrate among global middle-lower groups, which are perceived by "locals" as pernicious and damaging, especially because of the malicious intervention of those forces interested in exploiting social resentment and political sadism. It is important here to underline the contemporary relevance of Arendt's elucidation of the term "mob." According to Arendt, it is a "fundamental error" to see "the mob as identical with" the people (Arendt 1949, 107); it is instead a "distortion and caricature" of the people (155). The mob is a reserve of "superfluous forces," virtually chewed up and spat out from "the nation's body corporate … by the monstrous

accumulation of capital" (151). Its heterogeneous composition "made it seem that the mob and its representatives had abolished class differences, that those, standing outside the class-divided nation were the people itself (the *Volksgemeinschaft*, as the Nazis would call it)" (155).

Meaningfully, neo-populists of today are "*nè di destra nè di sinistra*," beyond right and left. Then, as today, this political vision of society, far from fostering ideas of ecumenical solidarity, displaces or misplaces the frontier of social conflict. As imperialism was the attempt "to divide mankind into master races and slave races, into higher and lower breeds, into colored peoples and white men, all of which were attempts to unify the people on the basis of the mob" (Arendt 1949, 152), today's neo-populism/sovereignism tries to do the same at the expense of immigrants.

According to Arendt, from a political perspective, the mob is a social stratum characterized by an aptitude of "essential irresponsibility," always tempted to convert "democracy into a despotism" (155). "The mob always will shout for the 'strong man,' the 'great leader,'" Arendt writes. "Plebiscites, therefore, with which modern mob leaders have obtained such excellent results, are an old concept of politicians who rely upon the mob" (107). It is clear that this inclination of "the mob" toward forms of *democratic* authoritarianism is quite consistent with the case of Italian expressions of neo-populism/sovereignism—in particular, the belief of M5S's and Lega's supporters that they have the right to ignore and bypass constitutional rules on the basis of elections, extemporary surveys, or even dubious tools like the internal plebiscite.

Moreover, this predominant sociopolitical attitude of the mob tends to emerge in those circumstances in which the social effects of economic failure meet frustration provoked by political crisis. In fact, Arendt states that "the French mob [was produced] in a series of scandals and public frauds," balanced by the Third Republic politicians' complacency: "While the mob actually stormed Jewish shops and assailed Jews in the streets, the language of high society made real, passionate violence look like harmless child's play" (107). Very similarly, a long "series of scandals and public frauds" is at the origin of the caricatured guises acquired by most of M5S's and Lega's supporters, whose leaders and activists, in turn, have been zealous in dismissing acts of violence against migrants and minorities as simple "child's play." This is clearly the case of the policy of "*porti chiusi*" (closed seaports) adopted by Salvini as Interior Minister of the first government chaired by Giuseppe Conte (2018–2019). That policy consisted in impeding ships full of refugees rescued on the high seas

from docking, instead keeping them in torturously extreme conditions for many days or even weeks. Then, as today, attributing political centrality and even institutional operability to the "sad passions" (Benasayag and Schmid 2003) of the mob represents an "almost magic formula … for reconciling the masses to the existent state of government and society" (Arendt 1949, 106). The diffuse and intense processes of neoliberalization have laid the groundwork for the current scenario, in which, despite the lack of any evidence and without any effective reason, immigrants have become "the 'key to history' and the central cause of all evils" (10) in neo-populist/sovereignist rhetoric.

Finally, a third parallelism: both historical totalitarian movements and the neo-populist/sovereignist organizations of today result from the interaction among the mechanisms, forces, causes, and effects considered within the analysis of the first two parallelisms (i.e., antisemitism/anti-immigrant nativism and imperialism/neoliberalization). In more analytical terms, these political phenomena at both moments catalyze expressions of resentment and sadism against innocent victims; proffer absurd visions of reality in order to organize, apparently reassure, and "treat" politically diffused feelings of uncertainty; and tend to denounce supposed conspiracies and frauds hidden behind the consolidated representations of reality. Both of them do so in historical conditions in which communities are transformed into something like closed boxes full of tensions, and where the socioeconomic reality of material difficulties are faced through the implementation of mechanisms of symbolic and real inferiorization and exclusion, perpetrated against particular harmless groups. This happens when—and because—the usual alibis are exhausted, and all the typical mechanisms of distraction from existing structural tensions fail.

The failure of the specific alibi constituted by imperialism, along with the extreme consequences of the First and then the Second World Wars (themselves, in part, outgrowths of imperialistic dynamics among international powers), found expression in and nurtured totalitarian movements. In fact, the generation between the two world wars had been more deeply touched by misery, were more concerned with the era's perplexities, and more deeply hurt by hypocrisy, than the apostles of good will and brotherhood had been. And they could no longer escape into exotic lands to pursue fantasies of heroism. There was no escape from the daily routine of misery, meekness, frustration, and resentment, embellished by a fake culture of educated talk. This inability to escape into the wide world, this feeling of being caught again and again in the trappings of society—so

different from the conditions which had formed the imperialist character—added a constant strain and the yearning for violence to the older passion for anonymity and for losing oneself (Arendt 1949, 331).

To return to the three acts of the current crisis considered at the beginning of this chapter. These acts together indicate the crash of the USA hegemonic cycle, whose final expansion coincided with neoliberalism. The upsurge and diffusion of phenomena related to neopopulism/sovereignism are the effect of the exhaustion of the "escape from the daily routine of misery, meekness, frustration, and resentment" offered by the neoliberal vulgate, and hence the ultimate breakage of the effective viability and social credibility of its motivating promises, its illusions of easy success and accessible wealth.

Moreover, as Arendt writes,

> Without the possibility of a radical change of role and character, … the self-willed immersion in the suprahuman forces of destruction seemed to be a salvation from the automatic identification with pre-established functions in society and their utter banality, and at the same time to help destroy the functioning itself. (Arendt 1949, 331)

The availability, viability, and credibility of solutions for a "radical change of role and character" that had been universally proposed to individuals and groups by neoliberalism have vanished, and in the face of this shift, people are plummeted into the "utter banality" of a life of deprivation, indebtedness, and unceasing struggle for survival dissimulated by mechanisms of generalized competition. Once neoliberalism's historical conditions reached their maximal bearable degree of extension, the logics of markets and entrepreneurship loudly collapsed, leaving on the ground the flesh of frustration, disorientation, and resentment generated by that crashed illusion: extreme individualism, the effective war of each against each, a sense of the senselessness of life outside of the economic/monetary sphere. These are the basic elements of the "overwhelming fatality" (331) animating the forms of destruction and self-destruction characteristic of our time, when in many regions of the world terrorism and/or suicide have been mistaken for "self-willed" practices of "salvation" (see Buscema 2019).

Conclusion

The argument presented here concerning the dangerous banality of neo-populism/sovereignism could be coupled to another argument about the historical disproportion between human motives and the risks they can produce. Those social phenomena are not just what they seem to be, but rather the expression of a radical form of evil that Arendt considers inscribed at the very heart of Western civilization.In fact, she writes, "antisemitism (not merely the hatred of Jews), imperialism (not merely conquest), totalitarianism (not merely dictatorship)" were the historical appearance of "an absolute evil," so defined precisely because its manifestations cannot be simply "deduced from humanly comprehensible motives" (Arendt 1950, viii–ix). So, "the final stages of totalitarianism" were the occasion in which we became aware of the fact that something inhuman moves Western history, and that therefore "human dignity needs a new guarantee which can be found only in a new political principle, in a new law on earth, whose validity this time must comprehend the whole of humanity while its power must remain strictly limited, rooted in, and controlled by newly defined territorial entities" (Arendt 1950, ix).

For this reason, we cannot consider the ontological elements of totalitarianism and its historical season as simply past. The comparison is not only or strictly a comparison. For historical totalitarianism represented the upwelling of the "subterranean stream of Western history … to the surface," which "usurped the dignity of our tradition" (1950, ix) and established "total domination as a novel form of government" (Arendt 1958, xi). That phantom still hovers among us. Totalitarianism still represents "the reality in which we live" (1950, ix).

Thus, a comparative approach of the kind undertaken in this chapter (and this collection) should also nurture the memory and awareness required to give birth to a "new political principle" and "new law on earth" effective against the incumbency of that *present past*, instead of vain and perilous attempts "to escape from the grimness of the present into nostalgia for a still intact past, or into the anticipated oblivion of a better future" (1950, ix). This approach requires solutions to the striking contradiction that contemporaneity has exacerbated instead of resolving:

> the irritating incompatibility between the actual power of modern man [sic] (greater than ever before, great to the point where he might challenge the very existence of his own universe) and the impotence of modern men to live in, and understand the sense of, a world which their own strength has established. The totalitarian attempt at global conquest and total domination has been the destructive way out of all impasses. Its victory may coincide with the destruction of humanity; wherever it has ruled, it has begun to destroy the essence of man. Yet to turn our backs on the destructive forces of the century is of little avail. (Arendt 1950, viii)

The essential elements constituting the "tragedy" of totalitarianism are alive in our time. Yet the much greater power and technological means available to humanity now gives to the ongoing recurrence of those elements the consistency of an unbearable "farce." Nevertheless, this is not a reason to not take the issue seriously. After all, we have already experienced the "outrageous fact that so small … a phenomenon as the Jewish question and antisemitism could become the catalytic agent for … the establishment of death factories. Or, the grotesque disparity between cause and effect which introduced the era of imperialism, when economic difficulties led, in a few decades, to a profound transformation of political conditions all over the world. Or, the curious contradiction between the totalitarian movements' avowed cynical 'realism' and their conspicuous disdain of the whole texture of reality" (Arendt 1950, viii).

The urge to solve such a striking and perhaps irresolvable contradiction exacerbates the tragic character of this historic farce. As Arendt taught us, its very ostensible banality may raise the greatest risks.

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PART II

Authoritarianism, Populism, and the Limits of Liberal Democracy



Fig. 7.1 The Weimar Constitution (booklet form)



CHAPTER 7

Second Time as Farce? Authoritarian Liberalism in Historical Perspective

Michael A. Wilkinson

In the last decade since the financial crisis, there has been renewed interest in the phenomenon of authoritarian liberalism, when politically authoritarian forms of governing are used to defend and maintain the order and interests of economic liberalism (e.g. Menendez 2015). This conjunction of political authoritarianism and economic liberalism emerges in opposition to democracy and especially in opposition to any democratic constituent power which threatens to disrupt the material order. It reaches a crescendo through the recent Euro-crisis, with domestic and supranational authorities defending programs of economic liberalism in the face of national recalcitrance, most evidently within the Eurozone (Wilkinson 2013). Similar phenomena have been labelled "authoritarian neoliberalism," grouping together critical episodes in Latin America and Southeast Asia, often under the auspices of the so-called Washington consensus in international affairs (Bruff 2014).

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_7

In each of these contexts, principles associated with democracy and social welfare are subsumed by a mode of governing in accordance with capital accumulation, marketization, and liberal economic rationality. The common denominator is the elision or repression of any democratic alternative to economic liberalism in general and austerity in particular. In the EU, this pressure is maintained in practice by a third factor: the material and ideological pressure to remain within the Euro-regime itself and the lack of any alternative political vision.

The confluence of political authoritarianism and economic liberalism in fact has a much longer historical pedigree (Cristi 1998). It was German constitutional theorist and social democrat, Hermann Heller, who coined the term "authoritarian liberalism" in the interwar period, applying it to the conservative and centrist cabinets who pushed programs of austerity through authoritarian politics in the early 1930s, bypassing parliament using various emergency measures (Heller 2015 [1932]).

Heller's polemic against the authoritarian liberals took place in the crucible of late Weimar, as it was teetering on the brink of collapse. But as Karl Polanyi shows, the pattern of authoritarian liberal response and reaction to economic crisis was far from unique to Weimar—right across the globe, states tried to maintain the political-economic demands of the gold standard, fiercely resisting social democratic movements through exceptional measures, until, eventually but unevenly, they abandoned gold and market liberal ideology, leading, for example, to Welfarism in Britain and the New Deal in the USA (Polanyi 2001 [1944]).

According to Polanyi, the more fiercely countries resisted social democracy through authoritarian government in the name of economic liberalism and sound finances, the stronger and fiercer the eventual backlash (the "double movement"). Authoritarian government not only hollowed out democracy, eroding social protections, subjugating unions and subordinating all political organization to the service of deflationary policies; it also ultimately weakened the ability of political society to respond to the fascist threat when it arrived. It was, in other words, authoritarian liberalism that directly prepared the ground for fascism (Polanyi 2001, 205).[1]

[1] Rejecting purely local or historical explanations for the situation that gave birth to Fascism, "in reality," Polanyi insists, the part it played was determined by one factor: "the condition of the market system" (Polanyi 2001 [1944], 250).

If it is in the interwar period that the contradictions within the liberal democratic capitalist state are most openly exposed, and the state forced to reveal its hand, Polanyi's account of the "great transformation" of the state and market over the long nineteenth century opens up a yet broader point about the backdrop to the interwar conjuncture. With a longer historical arc in view, the combination of political authoritarianism and economic liberalism comes to appear less exceptional than normal. The authoritarian state which defended the interests of capital and the ideas of economic liberalism made its mark not only in the crisis *response* of the 1920s and 1930s but in the initial *forging* of the market society across the nineteenth century. The idea of the liberal neutral state (the misnamed "nightwatchman state") was always a myth; the market society was not spontaneous but planned and often coercively implemented, using a strong state apparatus. Heller's polemic against authoritarian liberalism was likewise not only an assault on the regime managing the interregnum of late Weimar but on the broader trend of evolution from a national to a market liberalism.

With the label of authoritarianism, Heller was targeting not only the assorted cabinets of President Hindenberg, but the theorist who advised them, Carl Schmitt. Schmitt had recommended a strong state in order to defend the free market economy against the threat of democratic socialism and associated experiments of economic democracy, encapsulated in his address to German industrialists, the *Langnamverein*, in 1932, "strong state, free economy" (Cristi 1998). From Heller's perspective, Schmitt represented less a critic of liberalism (as he is so often portrayed) than a vehement opponent of democracy, based on his fear that democracy would undermine the liberal neutral state and turn towards socialism.

This broader presentation of authoritarian liberalism in turn provides a background against which to make sense of the longer-term reconstitution of the post-World War II European state and regional order, on the basis of a fear of democracy, and especially of democratic constituent power. The fear is not only the one emphasised in standard political and constitutional theory, that democracy will commit suicide, and so needs to be "militant" to protect itself, but that democracy may undermine

economic liberalism.[2] Schmitt's motto of "strong state, sound economy" would be taken up and reformulated by the German ordoliberals, who stressed the dangers of both unfettered democracy and of unfettered capitalism (with its own tendency to self-destruct by ending in monopolies and cartels). The state needed to be strong to secure the legal and institutional conditions (the *ordo*) of the free market and to disarm both democratic and capitalist threats to it (Bonefeld 2017).

This new brand of post-war authoritarianism reflects the reaction of political elites (as well as large sections of the people themselves) to the fear of a democratic- and class-consciousness that was unleashed in the interwar period and that remained a threat to the stability of a liberal order. "Militant democracy" is an inapposite label for this, concealing a de-democratization of society, with matters increasingly taken out of the hands of ordinary democratic politics in order to promote political and economic stability.

Indeed, the West German case represents a de-democratization not only of ordinary politics but also of constitutional politics, with its entrenched Basic Law and conservative constitutional culture, closely guarded by a Constitutional Court. This constitutional settlement is writ large through the project of European integration, elite-led and managed by experts and technocrats with the aim of constructing a single market with free movement of the factors of production. Although tempered in practice by corporatism, social democracy, and social Catholicism, it is from this perspective that we can see the neoliberal state of the 1970s, as well as the recent austerity state of the financial crisis, as representing a deepening of, rather than a departure from, the trajectory of postwar development.

Over the last decade, the postwar settlement has become increasingly *unsettled*. The pressure placed on elected governments to abandon it is coming to a head, and its most conspicuous symbols, the EU, Schengen, the single currency, and international human rights, are increasingly contested. This takes various forms depending on local context; in the debtor

[2] The tension between economic liberalism and democracy has now been reformulated in the work of Wolfgang Streeck as a tension between capitalism and democracy, representing logics or social forces of competition on the one hand and solidarity on the other (Streeck 2013).

states of the Eurozone it may be to regain monetary authority and democratic control over the economy more generally; in other states, membership of the European Union or the European Convention on Human Rights may be called into question; elsewhere the appeal of liberal democracy itself has vanished. In one member state after another the center seems unable to hold, establishment parties have been demolished, especially the traditional center-left, with the occurrence of widespread "Pasokification," named after the collapse of the Greek socialist party. The situation increasingly comes to resemble Gramsci's "organic crisis": the incapacity of the ruling bloc to maintain positional and ideological hegemony, reflecting a system that in its totality "is no longer able to generate societal consensus" (Fazi 2018).

As yet, however, there has been neither definitive rupture nor resolution, but rather a long interregnum; a series of crises as a combined and uneven process, where the rejection of established parties has been matched only by the relative impotence of potential alternatives. Only the nationalist Right has made any serious footholds, offering an inflection of the status quo, Hungary and Poland (and perhaps now Italy) developing an authoritarian populism from within the European Union, a variation of Polanyi's double movement but without a clear break from neoliberalism.

Weimar: Back to the Future

In reaction to the program of centrist and conservative presidential cabinets ruling late Weimar Germany through diktat and decree under President von Hindenberg, German constitutional theorist and social democrat Hermann Heller coined the term "authoritarian liberalism." In this brief phase, from 1930 to 1933, the "president's cabinets" bypassed parliamentary authority and governed through emergency measures in order to implement drastic cuts to state expenditure, internal devaluation, and a deflationary policy of Germany's central bank, under pressure of servicing its debts (Fig. 7.1).[3]

[3] According to Eberhard Kolb, these cabinets were supported not only by the Right but by large part of the centre, as well as powerful economic interest groups and the army faction. The fateful transition to authoritarianism, anti-Marxist and anti-parliamentarian in outlook, was coolly planned "and with the intention of drastically altering the constitutional system and the balance of social forces in favor of old elites of the army, bureaucracy and big business" (Kolb 2005, 117–118).

Heller offered the term authoritarian liberalism to capture the two dominant features of this regime: an avowed antipathy towards representative democracy in favour of autocracy and dictatorship, reflected in practice in the move from a parliamentary to presidential government using emergency powers under Article 48 of the constitution, and an ideological defense of free market liberalism and the protection of the interests of capital and major industrialists (Heller 2015 [1932]).

Although an apparently contradictory formation, authoritarian liberalism expresses a standard classical liberal desire to avoid irrational interference in the economy, but with the authoritarian component indicating that such avoidance could best be achieved by a strong state apparatus. From this perspective, the perceived threat to economic liberalism comes not primarily from state intervention, or from monopolies and cartels, but from "bottom-up" social democratic pressures, which can best be resisted by an authoritarian state, a strong conservative state asserting itself to remedy the weakness and disorder of the parliamentary system. It represents the belief that market liberalism requires a strong state in order to maintain the separation of politics and economics, more precisely in order to depoliticize the economy.[4] This is ideological because in reality, Heller notes, the authoritarian liberal state interferes ruthlessly in the economy in favor of certain class interests, in a manner that belies any claim to laissez-faire. Heller thus contributes to a broader line of argument developed by Franz Neumann, which aims to dispel the illusion of the liberal "night-watchman" state, a term used by Lassalle to dismiss classical liberalism in the nineteenth century (Neumann 1957).

The chief constitutional theorist in and of this interlude, which drew the curtain on the Weimar republic as a prelude to the fully fledged fascist dictatorship that would follow, was Carl Schmitt, who supported and advised the system of presidential cabinets before he became the "crown

[4] Hermann Heller earlier presented authoritarianism as a temptation that emerges from the social inequality endemic in liberal market society. The question for Heller was not what would constitute a genuine, or authentic, substantial unity, but rather what was the precondition for any political community to be sustained democratically. The answer, in short, was a complex synthesis of symbolic unity and social homogeneity, understood as socio-economic equality. Its absence would lay the path to authoritarianism (Heller 2000, 261).

jurist" of the Nazis.[5] Able to bypass parliamentary accountability and disruption, the system of presidential cabinets was "closer to Schmitt's heart than any other" (Thornhill 2000, 237). In taking stock of the concrete reality of this period, Heller was not only targeting the regime but Schmitt himself.

Schmitt's own defense of authoritarian liberalism was not merely conjunctural, restricted to the peculiar interregnum of late Weimar. On the contrary, it reflected his broader critique of the philosophy of legal positivism (especially its statutory version) combined with his fear of the danger posed to bourgeois society by mass democracy in a parliamentary system. Authoritarianism was presented as a necessary antidote to the relativism of legal positivism and the fragmentation caused by processes of democratization and pluralization, which were weakening the German state and endangering the liberal aspects of the Weimar Constitution.

The authoritarianism of Schmitt's Weimar position was not designed to defend the set of positive constitutional laws but the constitution as a political and existential phenomenon, the soul of the political community, standing above the temporary politics of competing social forces. The actually existing pluralism and fragmentation of the time was one step away from a condition of civil war within which there would be no authoritative judge to determine "mine" and "thine" (Balakrishnan 2000, 124). Schmitt, sympathetic to Hobbes's political theory, wanted to offer a Leviathan that was up to the task of setting itself over and above the various social movements, religious affiliations, and partisan political polemics that were threatening the stability of the constitutional order.

Distinguishing between the first—formal part of the Weimar constitution—its organizational elements—and the second, substantive part, which limited the political will of the community in the name of individual freedom, Schmitt would argue that the latter provided the Weimar Constitution with its ultimate principles (Schupmann 2017, 180). Once it became apparent that these could not be reconciled, protecting a bourgeois *Rechtsstaat* and contradictory socialist commitments (*Soziale*

[5] Until 1933, when he joined the NSDAP, Schmitt was an "implacable conservative opponent of the enemies of the Weimar state", especially those on the left (Tribe 1995, 175).

Rechtsstaat), guaranteeing private property as well as promising socialization of the means of production,[6] Schmitt's solution was to pare the substantive provisions down to the bare liberal essentials, a minimal set of private rights based on an individualistic social order.[7] If and when decision was necessary, it would be made in favor of the liberal *Rechtsstaat* and against socialism, prioritizing negative liberties enforceable against the state above positive political rights over the state, with only the former properly considered basic rights protectable by judicial review (Schupmann 2017, 184–185). The institution of private property was important for Schmitt not only in ensuring the dominance of the prevailing concrete order but in precluding any instrumentalization of the constitution to achieve the aims of socialism or communism (Schupmann 2017, 187). Schmitt employed the term the Absolute Constitution to connote this substantive constitutional identity, which liberalism was incapable of properly defending due to its constitutional relativism and association with legal positivism.

Schmitt's authoritarianism was thus offered to temper the domestic threat of social democracy and erode the growing power of the proletariat, fearful that a new constituent power could overturn the liberal bourgeois order established by the constitution. Schmitt's *Verfassungslehre* published in 1928 emphasised the point:

> Now the proletariat becomes the people, because it is the bearer of this negativity (that was Sieyes' third estate: which was nothing and shall become everything). It is the part of the population which does not own, which does not have a share in the produced surplus value, and finds no place in the existing order… Democracy turns into proletarian democracy, and replaces the liberalism of the propertied and educated bourgeoisie. (Schmitt 2008, 271–272)

[6] The architect of the constitution, Hugo Preuss, had himself recognized this dilemma (Preuss 2000).

[7] The "unholy alliance" between Hayek and Schmitt has already been explored (Scheuerman 1997).

For Schmitt, the chief threat to the stability of the late Weimar state and its constitution was democracy, not liberalism.[8] As Renato Cristi puts it: "if liberalism were to restrict its apoliticism to the sphere of civil society, and acknowledge the necessity of a sovereign state that retained the monopoly of the political, Schmitt would not object to conservative or authoritarian liberalism" (Cristi 1998, 6). Schmitt was anti-liberal only in the sense that he found problematic its weakness in self-defense, philosophically and politically; its tolerance of a plurality of competing interests and groups pointed to its inability to secure its own principles, and especially those of a liberal market economy. His concern was that liberal philosophy and liberal constitutionalism might not be robust enough to protect and secure its own commitments in an era of mass democracy.

If Schmitt derided a liberalism too weak to defend itself, he feared a democracy, having integrating the working class into the franchise, that threatened to follow a path towards socialism. In other words, it was not only the threat of revolutionary socialism or Bolshevism (however much the presence of the Soviet menace added to his insecurity) but the democratic road to socialism that concerned him. Despite the failure of the German revolution, and the end of the "proletarian moment," after 1918, the significance of the worker's movements in Germany meant that "the middle classes were no longer able to ignore the existence of class conflicts as the earlier liberals had done" (Neumann 1957, 47).[9]

Unlike in England, where the bourgeoisie could assert their interests against the labor movement through parliamentary methods, in Germany the conflict centered on the Weimar constitution, which reflected a compromise between socialists and liberals. The German bourgeoisie, in alliance with capital, would thus mobilize legal form and constitutional principle in their struggle against labor, unable to rely on a legislative power that was unpredictable and unstable. The labor movement itself had also appealed to constitutional principle to justify its own radical program, in order, conversely, to democratize the economy, to elevate the

[8] According to Renato Cristi, Schmitt's rapprochement with liberalism began earlier, enabled by a distinction between liberalism and democracy he introduced in 1923, which "allowed him to identify what he feared most: the increased pace of the democratic revolution" (Cristi 1998, 17).

[9] Although the concrete successes of economic democracy, integrated in the 1918 constitution by Article 165, were rather limited through the 1920s, the German Communist Party (KPD) would grow in strength and in representation in the *Bundestag* through the early 1930s as political instability grew.

worker from a subject of private law, a legal person, to a human being, able to exercise a power of control over his or her work (Dukes 2014, 15–17). The struggle between labor and capital, in other words, would take place over the meaning of the constitution itself.

It was labor lawyer Hugo Sinzheimer, an associate of Neumann, who had advocated the economic constitution as a supplement to the political constitution, to reject the "anarchy of so-called 'economic freedom'" in bourgeois society and ensure the economy was run to achieve social ends. This required a degree of economic self-determination by council systems, even integrating revolutionary workers councils as its organs (Dukes 2014, 17–19).[10] Labor law, in other words, was not only about changing the balance of working conditions in favor of the economic interests of labor, such as increasing minimum wages or decreasing the working day, but about democratic participation in the workplace as well as the whole economic order. The aim was not only to be free from exploitative practices but to be free collectively to participate in the exercise of political and economic power.

The difference on the conceptual plain is instructive. For Neumann, and those advancing democratic socialism, the economic and the political could not be separated. This was a bourgeois illusion. For Schmitt, however, this illusion was essential to maintain. He would do so through drawing a distinction between the qualitatively and quantitatively total state. The quantitatively total state (such as the welfare state advanced by the Social Democrats) was a weak state, threatened by economisation and colonised by interest groups and associations, deforming the "neutral state" of the nineteenth century (Tribe 1995, 179–180). The qualitatively total state by contrast was advocated to sever, rhetorically, the excessive connections that had been established between the state and the economy. A strong state was one which could distance itself from domestic economic interference and let the market run its course in an apparently autonomous manner.

[10] For Sinzheimer, "without economic democracy as a supplement to political democracy… the vast majority of the people remained unfree, subject to the control of a minority wielding economic power… Only with economic democracy – the elimination of despotism at the workplace, of the control of the markets by capital, and of the state by the propertied classes- could true democracy be achieved" (Dukes 2014, 18). Dukes notes that he later had a change of heart, suggesting that unions should bear primary responsibility for the negotiation of terms and conditions of employment (ibid., 20).

Democracy, in other words, was a threat to the capitalist state if it threatened a de-differentiation of the political and the economic, transcending private property and market economics towards common ownership of the means of production, and economic democracy. Class struggle and democratic emancipation posed an obvious problem for Schmitt's defense of bourgeois society. It was this threat that conditioned his authoritarianism.[11]

Postwar: A Misdiagnosis?

The message taken by mainstream constitutional theory in response to the extraordinary breakdown of liberal democracy would be quite different from the one Heller (and Neumann) had conveyed. It was not the potential for democracy to transcend liberalism, but the potential for it to threaten liberalism that resonated in the constitutional imagination. The predominant concern was the one expressed in Schmitt's late Weimar writings: democracy in general and the democratic constituent power in particular might erode or even overturn liberal constitutionalism and the material order that undergirds it.

Schmitt's concern came to prominence through the work of another constitutional theorist of the period, Karl Loewenstein, who had emigrated to the USA, but became closely involved in post-war German reconstruction. Loewenstein, writing in 1935, thought that liberal democracy needed to be more "militant" in the fight against fascism (and, if to a lesser extent, against communism) (Loewenstein 1935, 1937). The structures of the Weimar republic should have been more flexible in order for it to defend itself, by suspending constitutional rights, banning political parties, and preventing the rise of extremist groups and associations. Loewenstein, describing the opportunism of the fascist opponents of the constitution, urged liberal democracy to preempt them, to take the fight to its enemies, if necessary to "fight fire with fire" (Loewenstein 1937, 432).

Although Loewenstein's appeal resonated in the post-war era, it was but an echo of Carl Schmitt's own call for robust defense of the Weimar

[11] Benjamin Schupmann cites Ingeborg Maus' analysis, that "Schmitt was motivated above all by a desire to protect bourgeois property rights against the threat of socialism", although he himself suggests that protection of property rights was only a genuine concern for Schmitt was peripheral to his overall project (Schupmann 2017, 36).

constitution by diktat and decree (Schupmann 2017). It was, in other words, a call for liberalism to be more authoritarian, if necessary to sacrifice political liberalism for the maintenance of economic liberalism.

In the aftermath of World War II, mainstream political and constitutional theory became preoccupied with bolstering this line of liberal constitutional defense. It neglected sociological examination of the material order, of the dynamic of capitalism and democracy, or of the way inequality undermined stability. The West German practice of entrenching strong constitutional guarantees to protect individual rights became increasingly influential and widespread, less as a dignified response to Nazism than as an exercise in liberal state-building. Constitutional lawyers, and those tasked with designing legal and political institutions, were dedicated to the justification of various institutional arrangements—whether domestic, international or supranational—that would constrain majoritarianism, with the rationale (or pretext) of preventing "democratic backsliding" or avoiding "democratic irrationality." Independent technocratic institutions such as constitutional courts, expert commissions, and central banks, became the norm, and were gradually ingrained in the liberal constitutional imagination.

Jan-Werner Müller, with his label of "restrained democracy," offers a more accurate assessment of this set of phenomena than suggested by the inappositely named "militant democracy" (Müller 2011). Müller in effect shows how it was liberalism and political moderation that was to be militantly advanced and protected. The Christian Democratic parties and a widespread ethos of social Catholicism played a strong role in this settlement, as did the project of European integration. But Müller underplays its material constitution and political economy; militancy was driven by concerns to keep the wheels of economic liberalism revolving as much as it was to defend political liberalism, still less to promote strong democracy. Democracy, rather than presented as an opportunity, an emancipatory material struggle for equal liberty in all domains, is disarmed as "liberal democracy," or dismissed as likely to entail a "tyranny of the majority."[12] Popular sovereignty, as democratic constituent power,

[12] In constitutional enquiry, the focus was on the dangers of strong (unfettered) democracy, rather than, as Heller and Polanyi had warned, of unfettered capitalism and its destructive consequences. The fragility of the Weimar constitution in the absence of constitutional review and even legal positivism's relativising of the question of legitimacy are

disappears, subsumed into written constitutional law, juristic institutions, and the protection of constitutional rights.

The post-war constitutional imagination in Europe is expressed in the story of West German constitutional development: "we are (afraid of) the people" (Möllers 2008). Reaction to this fear entailed a new vision not only of the governing function (in particular the technocratic functioning of government) but also of the governing relationship, the relation between state and society, and specifically of the restricted nature of the right to rule over the economy. In other words, this is a vision of de-democratization both of the constituent and of the constituted powers, of sovereignty and of government. It establishes a vision of political society prefigured in the authoritarian liberalism of the interwar years, of the individual as a market participant rather than a political actor, a consumer rather than a citizen. It is, properly understood, authoritarian in character; but it is an authoritarianism based on a fear of freedom that has not only a class character, but also a socio-psychological dimension: it is not only that elites fear and distrust the people, but also that the people fear and distrust themselves.[13]

As a constitutional vision, this new style of authoritarianism was presaged in the work of the ordoliberals, whose founding meeting in Freiberg coincided with Schmitt's address to the *Langnamsverein*, "strong state, sound economy."[14] Sharing Schmitt's vehement anticommunism, obsession with order, distrust of economic democracy, and belief in a strong state, they nevertheless presented unfettered capitalism (and not only democracy) as a challenge to the competition-based market society.[15] Carl Joachim Friedrich identifies the ideological and constitutional significance of this "new liberalism" as early as 1955, noting how it signals a fundamental re-ordering of the basic ideas underpinning constitutional theory (Friedrich 1955, 509). As Friedrich understood, and as

blamed by constitutional theorists and legal philosophers for Weimar's collapse (see Fuller 1955, 630; Müller 2011, 129; cf. Neumann 2009 [1942]).

[13] The notion that a "fear of freedom" underpins the turn to authoritarianism is explored as social psychological phenomenon in the work of Erich Fromm (1941).

[14] On the link between Schmitt and the ordoliberals, and the significant of both for the Euro, see Werner Bonefeld (2017).

[15] This too had been prefigured by those on the Left, Franz Neumann identifying the threat of organized and monopoly capitalism to the rule of law in the 1920s (Neumann 1987).

Foucault would later explore in his lectures on neoliberal governmentality in 1979, the decisive theoretical turn triggered by German ordoliberalism had been to replace constituent power (or popular sovereignty) with individual economic freedom—a freedom to participate in the market rather than the polis—as the legitimating device for the whole constitutional order (Foucault 2008). This is not only a question of delegating power to technocratic agencies to avoid temporary democratic impulses; it is a basic elision or denial of political in favour of economic freedom.

The new liberalism reversed the original meaning of the economic constitution, which for Neumann and Sinzheimer had meant democratic control of the economy (Dukes 2014). Instead, the constitution itself becomes sovereign, protecting the economy *from* democracy, through technocratic and legal means. For the ordoliberals, the new economic constitutionalism would achieve the complete abolition of class as well as national conflicts from the political domain. It would be based on formal equality, individual economic rights, and a competitive market economy, protected by a strong state and its constitutional and legal apparatus which would disarm any democratic or capitalist threats to it. The class-conscious struggles of the interwar period would be repressed, and even abolished, in order to secure political and economic *stability* (Gerber 1994).

The interwar project of achieving economic democracy through workers councils—associated with Sinzheimer and Neumann's earlier incarnation of the economic constitution—would be effectively abandoned (cf. Glasman 1996). By the time of the publication of the national federation of trade unions' (DGB) Dusseldorf Programme in 1964, "the policy aims of the unions were no longer directed towards the institution of economic democracy. Demands were made instead for the extension of codetermination within a Keynesian capitalist economy" (Dukes 2014, 54). Trade unions and employers would increasingly negotiate wage-setting in cooperation with each other, securing the "social peace" in conjunction with a welfare state corporatism that could not be upscaled to the European level (Streeck and Schmitter 1991).

Although it was far from straightforwardly applied (in practice softened by the social market economy and aspects of corporatism), the ordoliberal reconfiguration of the constitutional imagination would become ideologically ascendant, first in Germany and then elsewhere, not least through

its influence on the process of European constitutionalisation.[16] The self-understanding of constitution-making in Europe would be increasingly conditioned by ideologies and interests that correspond to economic rationality and the logic of market competition, effecting a new geopolitical differentiation of the political and economic realms by taking matters out of domestic democratic deliberation. In conjunction with principles developed by the European Court of Justice, this geopolitical separation would import a strong economically liberal bias into the dynamic of European integration (Scharpf 2010).

The project of European integration is a key part of the postwar settlement, representing a soft form of authoritarian liberalism writ large (Wilkinson 2019). Democracy was simply not in the DNA of the original plans for European economic integration. Its energies were generated through administrative and bureaucratic processes rather than democratic movements. The European economic constitution emulated that of the ordoliberals, not the workers' democracy extolled by Neumann and Sinnzheimer. Viewed through the lens of interwar labor lawyers, the formal mechanisms for the involvement of labor in the administration of the EEC and the nascent "European economy" were "markedly limited" from "the first decades of their existence" (Dukes 2014, 124), frustrating any goals for a transnational labor constitution. In practice, workers were "almost wholly reliant on the goodwill of the European Commission," unable to influence policy in a social direction (Dukes 2014, 136).

The purpose of the new economic constitutionalism was to avoid a politicization of the economy which—in the ordoliberal imagination—would lead to the instability of the state. In other words, its purpose was to protect the economy from political-democratic pressures; "this could not be but authoritarian" (Jayasuriya 2001, 453). It is a trend that would become more acute in time and of course extend far beyond the EU, "Geneva school neoliberals" transposing the ordoliberal idea of the economic constitution… to the scale beyond the nation," protecting an increasingly global marketplace from domestic democratic interference (Slobodian 2018, 8). Labor was thus hamstrung by international

[16] See further Gerber (1994; cf. Wigger 2017).

and supranational developments that weakened its domestic influence and which it had no possibility of influencing in turn.[17]

From this perspective, the dismantling of the social contract between labor and capital in the decades of neoliberalism and its ripping up since the financial crisis should be in no way surprising: this is not merely a result of the neoliberal turn encapsulated by the Maastricht Treaty and the financialisation of the economy. On the contrary, it deepens a trajectory that begins with post-war reconstruction. At least from the Treaty of Rome in 1958, the purpose and function of integration, and the post-war settlement more generally, has been to depoliticize the economy, foster market integration, and restrain democratic passions.

Conclusion

Considered in the longue durée of the battle between economic liberalism and social democracy, Maastricht was presented as having put a decisive end to the European civil war between Right and Left that took place across the "short twentieth century." It signalled the triumph of economic liberalism over socialism. The victory of capitalism itself was even declared complete. As Etienne Balibar frames it, reflecting on the (re-)birth of the EU at the Treaty of Maastricht, what is extraordinary is the explicit and detailed setting of its liberal political-economic goals into rigid constitutional guarantees:

> The EU in its constitutive moment (Maastricht) was endowed with a quasi-constitution… where, for the first time in this part of the world… a principle of political economy deriving from a specific ideological discourse (namely neo-liberal deregulation and unrestricted competition, believed to produce 'optimal allocation of resources' and spontaneously 'just' redistribution) was presented as the sovereign rule which all member states ought to implement in their national policies under close surveillance of the federal (or quasi-federal) organs of the Union… (Balibar 2014, 202)

If the argument here is accepted, however, this battle, or at least its preliminary stages, may already have been lost. The constitutional implications of ordo- and neo-liberal political economy are underscored by the reconstitution of Europe right from the start of the postwar period.

[17] See further e.g. Gill and Cutler (2014, 1–21).

Once *politics* is reduced to a single political-economic logic, and the possibility of genuine renewal comes down to the possibility of exercising a constituent power that is subsumed into constitutional rights, the autonomy of the political is reduced to either a bare formality or the prospect of a revolutionary rupture. This resettlement occurs at the beginning of the postwar reconstitution of the European state and in significant part through the project of European integration. The re-differentiation of the political and the economic is cemented at Maastricht, continued and taken to a further stage with the constitution of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU).

The post-war constitutional imagination in Europe, though far from democratic, is more passively than actively authoritarian. It is technocratic, institutional, and juridical in terms of its constitutional form. In substance it is economically liberal, dedicated to expanding market integration, pursuing free trade, and intensifying economic rationality. Politically, it is moderate, extreme only in the centrism it espouses and the technocratic and managerial ethos it embodies. Democracy is restrained but not yet extinguished. But this hollowing out of democracy presages the more active authoritarianism to come. Although democracy had always been subdued in the postwar construct, since Maastricht, and especially since the Eurocrisis, parliaments and even popular referenda would be systematically subordinated in the process of integration.[18] The "Oxi" referendum in Greece in 2015 was the most explosive, but far from the only, expression of popular discontent to be overridden in this way.

If the ultimate capitulation of Greece suggests authoritarian liberalism may continue, developments elsewhere, as right-wing Euroskeptic parties surge in popularity (in Hungary, Poland, as well as in the core of Europe, in France, Germany and Italy) suggests that the authoritarian liberal suppression of the democratic voice may, as in the interwar period, tend not only to the victory of capitalism, but also to the resurgence of reactionary forms of authoritarian populism.[19] So although there has been no definitive rupture from the post-war order there is increasingly an inflection, where the protection of economic liberalism and the interests of capital is

[18] The most conspicuous warning sign was surely the Dutch and French rejection of the EU Constitutional Treaty in 2005, which was followed by its repackaging in the Lisbon Treaty.

[19] The turn to "authoritarian populism" in Eastern Europe has been described as an inflection of, rather than rupture from, neoliberalism (Dale and Fabry 2018).

maintained not with restraint but with more active forms of political *illiberalism*, particularly with regard to issues of identity and immigration, as right-wing nationalism returns. This is occurring *within* the European Union, most evidently in Central and Eastern Europe but also in the core. Brexit may follow this inflection. But if it were to signify a rupture with the post-war order of authoritarian liberalism, it could also be through a reclaiming of democratic sovereignty over the economy.

The current conjuncture has thrown the post-war settlement into doubt, if not yet into oblivion. It has been strongly contested, but there has been no definitive rupture, with the possible exception of Brexit. Whether any reprisal of the interwar breakdown of liberal democracy will more closely resemble tragedy or farce remains to be seen. The UK is one of the few places in Europe to have avoided the "Pasokification" (virtual annihilation) of the traditional center left party, the UK Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn performing extraordinarily well in comparison with its sister parties on the Continent, with roughly 40% of the electorate in the 2017 general election, and becoming the biggest political party in Europe. There are of course particular features of the UK's constitutional landscape that explain this divergence other than Brexit alone. But is it a possibility that the UK's departure from the status quo of EU membership, ironically given its advanced neoliberal trajectory, might lead not to a right-wing authoritarian illiberalism, as is occurring *within* the European Union, but towards a form of democratic socialism, as may only be feasible *outside* it (Lapavitas 2018)?

The underlying tensions contributing to the present long interregnum are not merely temporary, linked to a period of economic emergency; on the contrary, authoritarian liberalism is part of the DNA of the post-war constitutional settlement in Europe. The aim of the Euro-crisis measures has not been to enable a future return to normal democratic politics, but to restore the pressure of the financial markets and the constraints imposed by them, reinstating by different means the same constraints (conditionality) now imposed through political coercion and institutional devices such as the European Stability Mechanism and the Outright Monetary Transactions of the ECB (Wilkinson 2015). The last decade of crisis response can be viewed as having effected, in practice, a conservative revolution: bypassing and circumventing normal parliamentary, democratic, and legal accountability in order to conserve a liberal economic regime. If this is just as Schmitt had advised in late Weimar, the present bloc appears

more robust than its predecessor and the alternatives less potent—so far at least.

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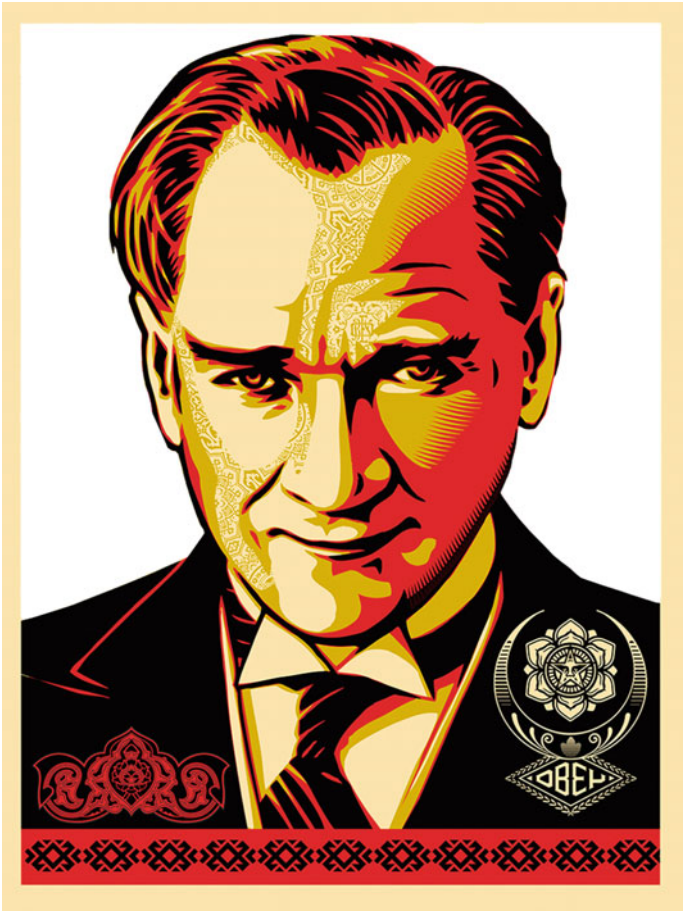


Fig. 8.1 Kemal Print by Shephard Fairey (2008). Image provided by courtesy of the artist

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CHAPTER 8

A Second Foundation? Constitution, Nation-Building, and the Deepening of Authoritarianism in Turkey

Rosa Burç and Mahir Tokatlı

Construction works for the new complex to replace the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM, Atatürk Kültür Merkezi), located right on İstanbul's Taksim Square, began on February 10, 2019 with a ceremony opened by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan himself. During his opening speech, he described protesters against the new building as "ideologically driven" and not different from those "who reject the country's war on terror" (TRT Haber 2019). He was specifically referring to the thousands of academics who signed a 2016 petition calling for an end to siege politics in the country's Kurdish-majority southeast after the June 2015 elections

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_8

and countless public figures, activists, and journalists, who criticized government measures taken under the state of emergency declared after the controlled 2016 coup d'état.

As part of AKP's (Party for Justice and Development) so-called Urban Renewal Project for İstanbul, in which many historic buildings and traditional neighborhoods were replaced by high-end housings and/or shopping malls, the demolition of the AKM carried significant symbolic value. The construction of the building was initiated in 1946 but not completed until 1969. It was not only considered an architectural icon of the young and modern Turkish republic, but also indexed Western aspirations of the Kemalist elites, who were devoted to the founding principles of the republic. It was during the Gezi resistance in summer 2013 that the AKM again attracted attention, although it had been out of operation since 2008. Protesters reclaimed the building as a symbol of early republican paradigms such as secular Kemalism and struggled for its preservation by resisting AKP's neoliberal policies combined with Islamist conservativism since its election to government in 2002 (Karaman 2013; Lelandais 2014). The case of İstanbul's AKM exemplifies how the AKP government has consolidated power by destroying, rebuilding, and pacifying the remnants of the old order, as well as responding to counter-hegemonic alternatives.

This chapter departs from the aftermath of the June 2015 elections and the controlled coup attempt in 2016, to shed light on measures taken by the AKP government to deepen authoritarianism by transforming state institutions via constitutional amendments that aim at significantly remodeling the constitutional fabric of the country. We argue that these two critical junctures have empowered the Erdoğan government to put Turkey on the course of consolidated autocracy[1]; it recalls the Schmittian definition of dictatorship as the best form of democracy, where for him the dictator—elected by acclamation—can most accurately portray the presumed (single) will of the people. Both parliament and public debates would only

[1]The majority of contemporary literature refers to Turkey as a competitive (Esen and Gümüşçü 2018) or fully authoritarian regime (Çalışkan 2018). Previously it was described as an illiberal democracy. The transition from a defective democracy to an autocracy has already been crossed in AKP rule; see also various democracy indices such as the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (although there is much to criticize about BTI).

undermine the supposedly united will of the people. Therefore, he concludes that the rule of the people can best be practiced in a dictatorship (Schmitt 2010, 42).

We aim to assess what scholars have called a second foundation of Turkey (Bargu 2018, 25) by comparing the interwar period and post-2015 on *how* "New Turkey" was established in both cases, hence we examine what similarities and differences both periods hold in the ways of founding a "new" nation-state. Particular attention will be given to (1) constitution-building during the interwar period and today and (2) the state's approach to the so-called Kurdish Question. What is widely considered a second foundation, we argue, actually demonstrates a reemphasis of the republic's default to of one state, one nation, one flag, one language. The latter becomes evident when we discuss how in both cases, during the so-called long 1930s and the post-2015 period, necropolitics in the form of siege politics, forced resettlements, and pacification of resistant regions in the country's predominantly Kurdish southeast have been an integral part of founding the "new" (nation) state (Fig. 8.1).

Old-New Turkey?

A first "New Turkey" was announced with the foundation of the Turkish republic on October 30, 1923. It took almost a century until another "New Turkey" was proclaimed in 2018. Building upon the rhetoric of making the state anew nearly 100 years after Turkey's establishment—epitomized in the "Vision 2023"—campaign launched by the then Prime Minister Erdoğan (Hussein 2018), the presidential and parliamentary elections in June 2018 put a modified constitution in power. This constitution had been adopted in spring 2017 by a narrow margin in an unfree and unfair referendum held under looming suspicion of election fraud (Esen and Gümüşçü 2017; Klimek et al. 2017) and whose foundation was laid in a two-year state of emergency (between 2016 and 2018). The declared state of emergency, advanced as necessary to embodying the Turkish nation in a "strong state" to protect it from internal and external enemies, helped the ruling government to persuade the right-wing radical MHP (Nationalist Action Party), previously opposed the proposal for a "presidential system," to become a permanent ally in transforming the political system (Burç and Tokatlı 2019).

This "work of persuasion" was largely successful due to the resurrection of a kurdophobe political practice, a cornerstone of the ideological orientation of the MHP, with roots in the early 1930s republican period and in steps taken by the sovereign in a state of emergency. The sovereign here, in a Schmittian sense, is the president, empowered to issue decrees that bypass parliament and that cannot be judicially challenged; in short: the elimination of the separation of powers. Under the premise of restoring order, the last remaining liberal elements in Turkey's already defective democracy were completely destroyed. Any attempt to evade this repression was framed as rebellion and answered violently, as the case of the imposed siege politics in the Kurdish-majority southeast, as well as severe political oppression against the HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party) will illustrate. As Carl Schmitt put it: "unlimited power was exercised under the pretext of restoring order, and what, in the past, had been called 'freedom' was now called 'uproar' and 'disorder'" (2014, 88).

According to the ruling party AKP, the so-called presidential system indicates the beginning of a "New Turkey." It is the second time that a transformation of the institutional order has been described as the establishment of a "New Turkey." Especially in the context of the interwar period, the "new" was an integral part in the palingenetic rhetoric of nationalisms underpinning fascist states of the time. As Roger Griffin argues the "new" order was not new per se, since it was based on a reactionary and conservative force, but rather narrated as a revolutionary change that constituted an element of the core myth defined as the "fascist minimum" (1994, 13). In his "great speech" to parliament 1927, Mustafa Kemal spoke frequently of establishing a "New Turkey;" with this terminology he expressed a radical turning away from the old order identified with the Ottoman Empire.

While it remains open for debate as to whether or not Turkey constituted or became a fascist state during this interwar period, we assert that the newly founded nation-state under Mustafa Kemal legitimized the deepening of authoritarianism through the narration of a revolutionary new order, which after the demise of the Ottoman Empire would reposition Turkey in the geopolitical arena and protect it against the colonial interests of Western powers. The rise of authoritarianism in Turkey during the interwar period therefore, as well as elsewhere in Europe, was associated with a transition to modernity, hence with the creation of a

"new order" embodied in the violent making of the modern nation-state system.

The "new" under the AKP, however, claimed to break with the "old" order under Kemalism, which ultimately meant a change in hegemony within the state. In both cases we see that the "new order," be it the republican claim under Mustafa Kemal or the change of constitution under Erdoğan, did not mean the establishment of a democratic order, but rather the deepening of authoritarianism. In both cases, mechanisms of autocratic governance were simply transferred into the new order. The narrative of a "New Turkey" thus served to consolidate power and give further legitimacy to rulers.

Two Foundations and Their Constitutions

From the perspective of comparative politics, we analyze the similarities and differences between the current so-called second foundation and the first proclamation in 1923 based on continuities and ruptures within the respective constitutions. One peculiarity, however, is that the first non-Ottoman, but Kemalist constitution of 1921 exemplified a provisional solution for the following three years and was already modified by a simple majority in 1923 and replaced by a completely new constitution just one year later. Thus, elements of both constitutions (1921 and 1924) will be taken into account.

Constitutions must always be read within their context of creation and we must consider that they index both negative and positive aspects of their predecessors. One aspect both have in common, however, is a claim of breaking with the old order symbolically and factually. In the very first constitution this was explicitly expressed to the extent that, in contrast to the Sultan as the absolutist ruler, the government was relocated to parliament as a whole. Initially, an explicit executive was deliberately dispensed with; instead, all powers were concentrated in the legislature. The absolutist monarchy was in antagonism with popular sovereignty, which was to be carried solely by parliament. Despite a constitutional amendment of 1923, which introduced an elected president and also a prime minister, this pro-parliament spirit was transferred to the new constitution of 1924 and gave the president *de jure* hardly any powers. At least in the constitutional text, a clear break with the old institutional order can be observed; the genuinely "new" can thus be seen in the locating of sovereignty.

However, there is a significant discrepancy between constitutional writing and its practice. Admittedly, other rules of the game were applied in Turkey where its foundation was tightly led by the president and the presumably strong parliament became just a place where President Mustafa Kemal announced his orders (Solmaz 2016). Thus, the first years were oddly determined by a president who, according to the constitution, did not even exist as an independent organ and after installation in 1923 was quite weak. The subsequent constitution retained the newly created presidential office, and although the constitutional process was strongly influenced by Mustafa Kemal and his supporters, the parliament had to accept the prepared draft beforehand. Instead of mechanically approving the proposal, the deputies deliberated and rigorously restricted the president politically, resulting in another extremely weak president. An example of the parliament's high degree of self-confidence was when during negotiations in parliament, deputy Reşat Bey said that he would not even grant the president the power to dissolve parliament if Allah were the president, arguing that the parliament is the highest and only organ, which was elected by the people as sovereign (Gözübüyük and Sezgin 1957, 188).

Ultimately, the constitution was adopted with a weak president and many changes were enforced by parliament in this regard. Nevertheless, this reality blatantly diverged from the constitution, with two extremely strong presidents, Mustafa Kemal, and after Kemal's death in 1938, İsmet İnönü. Basically, both temporal phases of the "foundation" go hand in hand with a strict centralization of state power into the hands of one person and a violent homogenization of society.

It can be argued that aspirations of homogenizing society into a single cultural-ethnic stream as part of a transition to modernity and nation-building of a nation during the interwar period succeeded the Armenian genocide of 1915 that can be seen as its first expression.

With the demise of the Ottoman Empire, however, comparable practices were utilized not "only" to build a nation but to further consolidate the newly established state with nationalist force. Alongside violent actions against the country's Kurdish population, discussed below, minorities such as Jews during the 1930s and Greeks during the 1950s

were subjected to oppressive top-down homogenization policies and nationalism.[2]

Although this was not initially evident in the constitutional text of the 1920s, political actions and the fundamental antidemocratic conditions of political life such as bans against religious and traditional attire in public and a ban against the passive and active use of the Kurdish language stand against the incorporation of party principles into the constitution, hence a merger of party and state.[3] For example, even though women's suffrage was introduced, elites continued to maintain the electoral system from the Ottoman Empire, which provided rather undemocratic indirect election of deputies (Olgun 2011). Hence, ultimately the party chair decided who was allowed to represent the interests in the capital of Ankara. Again, there was no democratic state in mind, but rather a merger between state and party. This was completed with a ban on oppositional parties and a de facto one-party regime emerged shortly after the establishment of the new state, which contradicted the universalist claims of the Western Kemalist elites. Eventually, a sort of post-Ottoman particularism was established in the guise of universalism (Tokatlı 2019a).

Having the recent controversial Turkish debates on decentralization in mind, it sounds astonishing, but in 1921 a large part of the constitutional text dealt with the provisions of a decentralized order (Tanör 2015, 263) and thus stands in stark contrast to its successors, all of which established a massive centralization of power. While this may initially have been due to the turmoil of the "Turkish war of independence," it certainly helped the mobilization of local militias on the periphery, as they supposedly

[2] In the prevailing literature, the term ultra-nationalism is often used to describe Turkish nationalism. Roger Griffin defines ultra-nationalism as a form of nationalism that has xenophobia at its core and aims to legitimize itself through narratives of historical greatness and victories against alleged enemies, as well as expressing itself through vulgarized forms of genetics and rationalized ideas of national superiority (Blamires and Jackson 2006, 452). During the 1930s in Turkey, the idea of a superior Turkish nation was rationalized with two pseudoscientific theories developed by the state: the so-called Sun Language Theory (Güneş Dil Teorisi), which proposed all human languages to be descendants of one proto-Turkic language, and the Turkish History Thesis (Türk Tarih Tezi), which claimed that Turks migrated from Central Asia into the world, populating and bringing civilization. The latter was an example of pre-Nazi scientific racism and was created to reject imaginaries in the West of the Turks as "belonging to the yellow race," hence as secondary people (Çagaptay 2006; Aytürk 2004; Gürpınar 2013).

[3] The only allowed party was the Republican People's Party (CHP) founded by Mustafa Kemal.

would not have to fear a loss of power to the central state once the war was considered won.

Initially, the AKP pursued a similar strategy in 2012, when it forged concrete plans for an obvious change in the government system for the first time, trying to convince enough MPs from HDP's Kurdish predecessor BDP (Peace and Democracy Party) to adopt their envisaged constitutional amendments. After all, establishing local powers in the provinces, municipalities, and cities would achieve what stands as *the essential demand* of Kurdish parties throughout the history of the Turkish Republic: decentralization. This is why the AKP decided to "buy" approval for their version of a "presidential system" with such concessions. Accordingly, prominent party members tried to counter the Turkish primal fear of separation through decentralized tendencies.

However, neither during the interwar period in 1924 nor today has power been divided vertically in the state apparatus; instead, there has been a successively more and more rigid centralization. In both cases, military operations against the periphery followed, especially in Kurdish populated areas, to violently enforce national homogenization (Aslan 2007; Küçük 2019; Üngör 2008). This in turn made the initial "efforts" to balance or reconcile peaceful coexistence seem obsolete.

On the contrary, it would appear that both state elites acted according to strategic criteria and were insincere. Additionally, there are apparent similarities in the contexts in which they were created and developed. A common basis was the emergence of a war that ultimately suggested a necessity for something "new." While the first foundation marked a "war of independence" out of the demise of the Ottoman Empire designed to prevent the premeditated downsizing of the territory to a "rump state" by international powers, the AKP's war was directed against alleged domestic enemies of the state. Perhaps, at least at the beginning of the twentieth century, one may acknowledge a contextual self-perceived progressive idea, but it is impossible to assert this claim for the war staged under post-2015 AKP rule. Conservative elements were purposively re-enforced to preserve the existing state, rather than in creating a new political order.

Following this thought, the primary motives for action of both actors differ. While the Kemalists always rhetorically emphasized national sovereignty and claimed for it a prominent role in constitutional processes, the AKP's *leitmotif* was the establishment of a strong state capable of action. Evidently, this can be seen in the constitutional provisions of the government system, i.e., the relationship between legislative and executive branches. There are further grave discontinuities here. For the first time, the modified constitution of 2018 weakens significantly the legislature *qua scriptura*, while the executive branch takes on an unbridled role and clearly dominates the rest. It would take significant imaginative power to certify a separation of powers in this scenario.

Rather, this order corresponds to the antiliberal conception of Carl Schmitt's centralist, authoritative state based on the decisions of a virtuous leader. The recent introduction of constitutionally unusual constructions such as presidential decree rights, which will come into force immediately, actually establishes unchecked rule by a single person. In this way, both Schmitt and the AKP believe that necessary decisions should not be watered down by the often-cumbersome parliamentary processes based on compromises, and that the population—understood as a homogenous mass—can be better represented and governed by a strong executive.

Of course, a prerequisite for this is the destruction of plural elements, which in turn is a conceivable interpretation of the constitutional amendments. Destruction is frequently accompanied by antiliberalism and antiparliamentarianism. For an example of the latter, the legislature is completely deprived of its systemically relevant functions. Not only has its eponymous role been snatched and the president granted the right to legislate bypassing parliament, but the loss of budgetary sovereignty also shows how little power the parliament has left. Parliament can no longer adopt a budget; this is in the hands of the president. The parliament can only approve or reject his proposal. If there is no agreement twice, the previous year's budget is automatically enacted and the president loses not an iota of his ability to operate.

These two constitutional provisions alone show the decimated position of the legislative branch, and actually represent something new in

the "New Turkey." Not even the neo-Kemalist 1982 coup constitution, despite its authoritarian, antiliberal, and antipluralist spirit, invalidated the parliament in such a massive way.

The architects of the constitutional amendments call the governmental system a "rationalized presidentialism" and believe they have improved the much-criticized presidential system in general by eliminating its supposed weaknesses (Atar 2017). They have failed to notice that instead they have abolished the defective democracy and turned Turkey into a semi-competitive autocracy. In their primitive understanding of democracy, however, they perceive the current system as a "true" democracy because the president embodies both the nation and the state. Everything *he* decides is for the good of the people and is legitimized by "elections."

Once more this can be read with Schmitt, who did not regard dictatorship as a*contradiction to democracy*, but rather assessed it as the best *form of democracy*, because it directly reflects the will of the people (2010, 42). This is precisely the state of mind in Turkey after 17 years of AKP rule and it strongly resembles the authoritarian and fascist regimes of interwar Europe.

During both the interwar period and under AKP rule, therefore, a "New Turkey" was promised to symbolize a break with the old institutional order, but there is a disparity between promises and reality. While the Kemalists primarily propagated modernization, the AKP clearly called for a stronger and more capable state, promising to solve the problems of individuals more effectively through presidential decisions. However, a look at constitutional practice—ignoring all special circumstances given the two different historical contexts—reveals the establishment of an authoritarian regime in both phases. Although the new order under AKP was often narrated as an antithesis to the old Kemalist order, it reenforced authoritarian elements that had been installed during the early years of the republic as a tool to establish itself as a single ruler. This is reminiscent of Schmitt's above-mentioned concept of an authoritarian centralist and homogeneous nation-state.

These two fundamental characteristics (homogenization and centralization), we argue, are recurring tools for establishing an authoritarian state, both in the "new" Turkish nation-state founded in the interwar period and in Erdoğan's proclaimed "New Turkey." As this chapter illustrates

using the example of the war against the country's Kurdish population during the 1930s and post-2015, the establishment of a "new" Turkey in both cases came hand in hand with necropolitical violence against the state's declared enemies, in which their identification and systematic elimination was rendered an existential necessity. Hence, in both cases, the main means of establishing a new order and holding on to power have been the securitization of the Kurdish issue. By no means did normal circumstances lead to the establishment of institutional orders, but rather a state of emergency in the Schmittian sense: exceptional situations in which violence against perceived enemies of the nation and state was a central ingredient (Schmitt 2015).

The Creation of an Old-New Enemy of the State After the June 2015 Elections

The surprising 2015 electoral success of HDP, a left alliance that emerged out of the Kurdish political movement in Turkey, caused a crucial setback to the government's plans to put in place constitutional amendments introducing the authoritarian so-called presidential system (Burç and Tokatlı 2019). In response, techniques to normalize emergency rule by routinizing executive decrees and eliminating the role of the parliament as an arena for deliberation, restructuring state apparatuses, re-securitizing the Kurdish issue, as well as using body politics as a tool for power preservation (Bargu 2016, 2018), were enhanced as methods to deepen the authoritarian state and to reiterate the nation as ethnically Turkish.

While during the interwar period, a homogenous and superior nation was invented to consolidate the newly established state, after the June 2015 elections, the return to a regressive definition of the nation came as a reaction to HDP's novel vision for Turkish politics. The party's democratic strategy was to circumvent the authoritarian character of the state with grassroots structures built by a pro-peace, pro-women, pro-worker, and pro-minority alliance of systematically marginalized groups, such as Kurds, women, leftists, Alevis, Ezidis, Armenians, and LGBTQ+individuals (Burç 2019b). HDP, coming from a long tradition of Kurdish parties banned shortly after their foundation, successfully reached out to a non-Kurdish electorate and advocated the counter-hegemonic model of "democratic nation" to replace the hegemonic paradigm of an ethno-religious nation-state (Burç 2018, 2019a; Güneş 2017).

The party's strategy directly challenged the Turkish state's status quo in general and the hegemonic physiognomy of AKP rule in particular. The counter-hegemonic project proved successful during the general elections in June 2015, where the AKP failed to gain at least 330 seats, hence a constitution-changing majority (Tokatlı 2016).

Restoring its hegemony therefore became the main political objective of the ruling AKP in the post-2015 period, which resulted in a reemphasis on the politics of exclusion, racialization, and securitization (Burç 2018; Tokatlı 2019b; Yılmaz and Turner 2019). Under the conditions of ideological challenge and electoral loss, the AKP government narrated a scenario of emergency, in which the HDP was portrayed as the main threat to the sacrosanct Turkish nation-state in order to realize the autocratic vision for a "New Turkey." Active attempts to criminalize the party and collectively punish its supporters became integral to the regime-changing ambitions of the government, which culminated in the declaration of the state of emergency after the controlled coup d'état in 2016. While the AKP government has been steadily replacing Kemalist hegemony in fostering religious identity and cutting the power of the secularist branch within the military, the extent to which methods of building a "New Turkey" resembles Kemalist rule needs delineating.

The Politics of Turkishness and Necropower

The rise of a nationalist state in Turkey, as in other nationalist movements in interwar Europe, was closely linked to the emergence of ethnicist Turkish nationalism as a political and nation-building force. Scholars argue however that despite the rise of Turkish nationalism, the legacy of the Ottoman Empire's *millet* system of ethno-religious identities, effectively shaped Turkey's understanding of citizenship (Çağaptay 2003). Some scholars even claim that this ethno-religious signifier of who belongs to the nation and who does not has been recurrent throughout the country's history (Yeğen 2004).

Mesut Yeğen argues that citizens in Turkey were divided into three realms of citizenship: those who inherent Turkishness by birth, those who can be assimilated into being Turkish, hence prospective-citizens, and those who, even if they wanted to, shall remain outsiders. The possibility of assimilating into Turkishness therefore was only granted to members of the Muslim community, as Turkishness was based on a shared religious identity. The legal establishment of minority rights only

for non-Muslim yet indigenous populations, such as Armenians, Greeks, and Jews, as well as the national exchange with Greece in 1923, exemplify how, despite the official doctrine of secularism and universal citizenship, in practice citizenship was shaped according to ethno-religious determinants.

Legislation passed after the establishment of the Turkish nation-state demonstrates a blend of both *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis* approaches to citizenship (Çağaptay 2003, 605). This caused a situation in which the non-Turkish yet majority-Muslim community of the Kurds were subjected to top-down assimilation, neither considered inherently part of the Turkish—ethnic—nation, nor complete outsiders, hence in Yegen's (2009) words were "prospective Turks." As a consequence, Turkification policies became the main driving force of the nation-building process, which culminated in violent and necropolitical oppression, particularly in Kurdish-majority areas that resisted the state's assimilationist agenda.

Necropolitics has been widely conceptualized as biopolitical forms of violence within the context of colonial rule, wars, and massacres as deployed by state power to preserve and perform sovereignty (Bargu 2016; Butler 2004; Foucault 1997; Giroux 2006; Mbembe 2003; Puar 2017). While this approach focuses mainly on the physical elimination of human life or the reduction of lives into "living deads," we argue that necropolitical violence against the Kurdish population has been an inherent tool of power consolidation in both interwar and post-2015 Turkey.

Power consolidation under Mustafa Kemal as well as Erdoğan was achieved through the (re)creation of the imagery of a homogenous and uncontested Turkish nation, in which certain populations that resisted were defined as a threat to the integrity of the nation-state and rendered disposable. Recalling what Mbembe calls the creation of "death worlds" as a consequence of modern sovereignty, we argue that in both interwar and post-2015 Turkey the politics of (social) death were put into practice in order to effectively limit democratic potential and reinforce the authoritarian trend of Turkish politics, leading the latter always closer to a form of dictatorship that by virtue of its ability to establish the rules to its pleasure and interest has been reinstating the long-standing tendency of driving necropolitics against the Kurdish population. The deepening of the

authoritarian state during both the first foundation of the Turkish republic and the so-called second foundation under AKP was therefore justified through performed necropolitical violence. The violent re-securitization of the "Kurdish Question" after a non-violent period of peace building measures between 2013 and 2015 needs to be highlighted under this premise as the existence of an unsolved "Kurdish problem" facilitated the power grab after the electoral defeat of the ruling AKP in 2015. Similar patterns are observable during the interwar period, when a newly born nation was consolidated by the performance of necropower against resisting rural areas mainly populated by Kurds.

Kurds in Old-New Turkey: Discriminated, Displaced, Dispossessed

Sur is a district in Turkey's southeast, a UNESCO world heritage site and part of the Kurdish-majority city Diyarbakır, which was among the first areas exposed to round-the-clock military curfews after the June 2015 elections.[4] When, in December 2015, the first photos of Sur broke through the news embargo imposed by the government, the extent of destruction was partly revealed as demolished buildings, houses riddled with bullet holes, raided shops, dead bodies on the streets, destroyed churches and mosques in the city's historic center.[5]

[4] Between August 2015 and 15 March 2016, curfews were declared in the neighborhoods of Sur and Yenişehir in Diyarbakır city and the towns of Lice, Silvan, Hazro, Hani, Dicle and Bismil in Diyarbakır province. They were also declared in the towns of Cizre, Silopi, and İdil in Şırnak province, and of Nusaybin, Dargeçit and Derik in Mardin province, Yüksekova in Hakkari province, Arıcak in Elazığ province, Sason in Batman province and Varto in Muş province; see ICG report, https://www.refworld.org/docid/56ebf69b4.html. In Diyarbakır province alone, 43 villages were exposed to a round-to-clock military curfews; see AJ report, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/turkey-declares-curfew-43-villages-diyarbakir-170530084449370.html.

[5] For a detailed report on the extent of war, see the United Nations report on the human rights situation in South-East Turkey (July 2015 to December 2016), February 2017, accessible at www.ohchr.org.

Shortly after the June 2015 general elections, on August 11, President Erdoğan declared the end of the precarious, yet promising peace talks with the PKK (Kurdistan Worker's Party). The breakdown of the peace negotiations was followed by a state-orchestrated political lynching campaign against Kurds, oppositional voices, critical media outlets and most of all against the left alliance HDP that had become a popular advocate of a democratic solution to the Kurdish Question (Çalışkan 2018, 22). HDP's soaring societal support and electoral success were considered an immediate threat to the constitution-changing plans of Erdoğan and challenged the core principles of Turkish nationalism.

The government launched so-called cleansing operations against supposed PKK members after the June 2015 elections; however, since these military operations were carried out in all Kurdish-majority cities where the HDP came out as the strongest party, it can be argued that the re-securitization of the Kurdish Question effectively targeted Kurdish civilians in an act of collective punishment for deviant electoral behavior. The imposed politics of war after the June elections in 2015 amounted to a total of 4551 deaths counted since the 20th of July 2015, of which 478 were civilians and 223 individuals of unknown affiliation between 16 and 35 years old (International Crisis Group 2019), entire districts destroyed, and a significant displacement of the local population.[6]

State violence against predominantly Kurdish-populated areas has been a regular feature of the modern Turkish state; the developments in the HDP strongholds, in particular the historic city center of Sur in Diyarbakir, draw many parallels to how Kurdish-majority areas were subjected to similar policies during the interwar period. Turkey during the 1930s became a strong case of Joel Migdal's definition of a "cohesive state." He asserts that those states with a high degree of integrated domination, hence a power balance between state and society, as well as within the state, are guaranteed to be successful. Integrated domination therefore is when the state manages to uphold full decision-making autonomy, which stands in contrast to "dispersed domination," when neither state nor society have the ability to implement (Migdal 2001, 126ff.). Integrated domination in interwar Turkey resulted in all kinds of measures

[6] See the International Crisis Group report for a detailed analysis: https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/turkeys-pkk-conflict-kills-almost-3000-two-years.

for Turkification, without any significant pushback from within the state nor from majority society.

While still a state-in-formation in the early 1920s, the 1930s showed how different parts of the state and society already worked in congruence and therefore were able to exercise effective power collectively, which ultimately expressed itself in the amplification of oppression against all perceived threats to building the imagined nation-state. Scholars like Nicole Watts (2000, 9) even argue that Turkey possessed the highest degree of "integrated domination" in the twentieth century during the 1930s up until the late 1940s, when slowly parts of the state were pulled in different directions, becoming "dispersed."

Assimilationist policies in the early republican years demonstrated how an ethno-religious category of Turkishness was considered national identity and deemed a significant aspect of state security. Turkification, assimilation, and forced relocation from the Kurdish-majority region, therefore, were perceived as security measures for territorial and national integrity. The case of Dersim, a Kurdish and Alevi region that rose up in 1937 against state oppression and was violently crushed in 1938 (Bozarslan 1988),[7] illustrates how necropower against the Kurdish-majority population was already a tool in interwar Turkey, used to consolidate state authority in nation-making. Borrowing from the methods of the interwar period, the AKP government followed a similar strategy to narrate its electoral and political nemesis as a threat to national integrity and state security by re-emphasizing the monocultural core values of the Turkish state during the 1930s.

Resettlement laws were at the heart of assimilationist policies during the 1920s and 1930s (Ülker 2008). While the AKP government did not issue any such resettlement law, it did reveal a 10-step "anti-terror action plan" aimed at repairing cities destroyed under siege, which involved compensation payments, government consultations with village guards that function as pro-government Kurdish militia, as well as the construction of bulletproof security towers in urban districts. The government's concept of war, which included a post-operation master plan, can be considered as an attempt to tear apart residents from their historically inhabited spaces, enforce economic dependency, and create obedient

[7] The Dersim operation lasted 17 days in total and killed 7954 local population, however, the number most likely will be higher as this does not include the killings before the operation was launched. More than 3500 people were forcefully displaced (Watts 2000).

citizens crushed into submission. Then-Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu stated when presenting the action plan on the 5th of February 2016: "We will unite the nation's conscience and wisdom with the state's reason. All differences between the nation and the state will be entirely eliminated and we will have an understanding of uniting and integrating the nation" (Cumhuriyet 2016).

About the same time, pro-government media outlets headlined "Terror needs to be responded by TOKI" or "Back to work TOKI" (Siyasi Haber 2015). TOKI is the abbreviation of the "Mass Housing Administration," which is the state housing body that has been operating directly under the prime minister since 2003. Despite being an active public enterprise officially, TOKI has become essentially a large privatization agency that administers the sale of public properties and buildings to private commercial parties; hence, public lands are being used as the main source of capital for mostly luxury housing projects that are being developed by selected contractors (Işıkkaya 2016).

The demolition of Sur had already begun in 2011 after Erdoğan declared new projects for Diyarbakır to be implemented by TOKI to make it more attractive for tourism. However, in 2013, construction works were stopped by local resistance, mainly mobilized by HDP-run municipalities. The AKP government is well known for neoliberal policies driven by profit-based construction. In the case of cities like Sur, the novelty in comparison with necropolitical violence was to build new mass residencies in city outskirts, to offer loans at a reduced rate to displaced residents, and to offer employment opportunities, hence creating a new relationship based on economic and political dependency between impoverished Kurdish citizens and the Turkish state.

The AKP government thus intertwined economic objectives and profiteering with necropolitics and assimilation. Practices of social, economic, and demographic engineering to achieve political gains, however, go back to the founding years of the republic. Integrating and homogenizing dissident regions into a common cultural stream by invading traditional spaces, deconstructing them, and creating new, controlled ones has deepened the authoritarian state through necropower against Kurdish people. After the Dersim massacre of 1938, the remaining Kurdish population

was redistributed to other cities by the state.[8] Resettlement policies in the form of laws passed during the 1930s, in the making of a new nation-state, or forced relocations as in the case of post-2015 Sur, exemplify state policies to domesticate those who resist homogenization. If we assume that landscapes are transformations of ideologies into a concrete form, where identities are created and reproduced through spaces, the Dersim massacre and contemporary siege politics in Sur illustrate the state targeting spaces known for dissent and resistance. After the military operation in Dersim in 1938, the Kurdish-Zaza populated city was renamed under Turkification policies into *Tunceli*, which translates as "iron first" (Bruinessen 1994).

Almost one hundred years later, the Turkish military shelled public squares, monuments, street walls, residential areas, and historic buildings such as churches and mosques in the historical center of Sur, which had previously been restored by the then-HDP municipality as part of their political campaign to create a counter-hegemonic space of peaceful inter-faith and interethnic existence. While during the interwar period, resettlement laws, and thus systematic depopulation, were enacted to pacify regions disobeying violent assimilation, under the AKP in the post-2015 period, de facto depopulation caused by a staged war in the inhabited city center followed by promises of cheap housing provided by the state in the city's outskirts seem to be contemporary attempts at the violent pacification of resisting populations within the authoritarian state.

Conclusion

With the centennial anniversary of the Turkish state approaching, the question to what extent constitutional changes under AKP rule comprise a new founding of the state or demonstrate a return to the long 1930s has become increasingly pressing. Despite a strong narrative of "breaking with the old," this chapter shows the continuity of necropolitical violence as a

[8] Regarding the homogenization politics, not surprisingly Dersim is the only Province (today in total 81) where the ethnic (Kurdish) and religious (Alevi) minorities live in the majority.

tool to consolidate the nation and the state's authority in times of contested power. From a comparative perspective, this means that although the AKP presented itself for a long time as an antithesis to the "old" Kemalist order—and was also presented as such by others—they adopted relevant Kemalist practices from the early years of the foundation, especially the 1930s, such as the (re)emphasis of the republic's default settings one state, one nation, one flag, one language. We showed that this had two major consequences in both periods: (1) the homogenization of society, and (2) the centralization of state power. This required the use of extensive state power that, according to Schmitt, is legitimate *when* the state is in danger. Ultimately, there is a major difference between the two phases. While an exceptional situation after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was obvious back then, the AKP had to *invent* such a threat as it is only on the basis of a concrete danger that the Schmittian state of emergency can be proclaimed. In addition to the supposed putschists, Erdoğan has identified the Kurds in general and the HDP in particular as a domestic threat to the state and has been taking violent action against them since the June 2015 elections. Again, the instrumentalization of an "enemy of the state" does not break with the old Kemalist order, but rather demonstrates a return.

Deepening the authoritarian state through homogenization and centralization, as we have shown, have been the main characteristics in both interwar Turkey and in the period after 2015, despite ideological differences between the Kemalist and Islamic political traditions. In both cases, the securitization of the Kurdish issue in the form of creating (social) death worlds, the criminalization of political aspirations, military siege politics, forced resettlements, pacification of resistant regions, economic dependencies on the state have facilitated the deepening of authoritarianism embedded in the narrative that rendered the establishment of a new order necessary to protect national integrity.

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Fig. 9.1 Peasant Whettering the Scythe (1928), Gyula Derkovits

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CHAPTER 9

Hungarian "Populism" and Antipopulism Today through the Looking Glass of the Interwar "Populist" Movement

Mary N. Taylor

In today's (neo)liberal media discourse, leaders such as Hungary's Viktor Orbán are labeled "populist." In the context of the rise of "antiestablishment" parties and politicians, a wide range of scholars and commentators in the last decades have come to agree that populism is a style or logic that constructs an opposition between the elite/powerful and the people/underdog. While the term usually points to actors on the right, many agree this style can be used by politicians located on any part of the political spectrum. Orbán's government has been compared with the interwar and World War II era Hungarian regimes that allied with Hitler's Germany, and embraced fascism and antisemitism, but also to the interwar *népi* (populist) movement. What can we learn by examining what was called populism in the 1930s and what is called populism today, in Hungary and more generally? (Fig. 9.1).

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_9

Visiting the similarities and differences between contemporary "populists" and the interwar *népi* (folk; populist; popular) movement that arose amid radical shifts in the organization of territories, peoples, and borders (the scalar organization of capital) will illuminate important historical particularities. It will also highlight the ways in which categories favored by liberalism provide analytical blind spots that aid in misidentifying movements and their historical contexts, while establishing liberalism as the normative political center. Teasing out differences and similarities among the political questions in Hungary in the long 1930s and today can give us valuable insight into how to think about the work of "populism" and (liberal) antipopulism and bring to light the historical and processual making of hegemonic formations.

My approach here emerges from my research on a folk dance and music revival movement that arose in the 1970s (also *népi*, but rarely translated as populist), which drew on methods of the interwar populist movement and inherited some of its organizational and institutional forms in the context of the state socialist cultural apparatus. I noted that while, like interwar "populists," this revival was concerned with peasants as the folk, unlike them, it neither tended to note "class" distinctions among peasants nor addressed land distribution. The revival has instead been particularly focused on ethnic Hungarian peasants in neighboring countries and preserving their "culture" in the face of assimilation, ethnic discrimination, and (first socialist, now capitalist) modernization. At the time of that research (2004/2005), I documented the strong support among folk revivalists for Orbán and Fidesz (with a vocal minority supporting the far-right MIÉP). Fidesz was in opposition then, having governed for a single term (1998–2002), and was coming to be associated with what I called the folk critique (Taylor 2008a). In 2004, folk revivalist support was voiced most loudly in connection with a referendum, supported by Fidesz, on establishing dual citizenship for ethnic Hungarians "over the borders."

The tendency to link Orbán and Fidesz to both the interwar government(s) and the *népi* movement makes a certain sense. It also reveals blind spots, however, particularly around the latter's opposition to these government(s). Calling Orbán and Fidesz populist (rarely if ever using the Hungarian term *népi*, but rather, the Latinate term *populista*) and associating him with interwar Christian National, fascist, and National Socialist governments, as well as the interwar populists without pause has the effect of obscuring class struggle and reducing the problem of the

folk/people to race or ethnicity. What I call liberal antipopulism does the work of delegitimating various political actors and parties (left or right), while establishing liberal as a neutral norm and justifying the technocratic decision-making so common to contemporary (neo)liberal governance as "democratic." It does so by labeling appeals for popular sovereignty and equality as "populist."

The chapter proceeds as follows: In the next section, I introduce the interwar *népi* movement and the conditions in which it arose. I then go on to discuss the historical conditions that gave rise to liberalisms, leftisms, and the Christian National Horthy regime against which both populists and urbanists agitated. I next introduce the three pillars of the *népi* movement: land reform, the franchise, and cultural validation in this context. Following this, I jump to the populist/antipopulist dynamics of the postsocialist period. I then touch on the rise of Fidesz's "populism" in a period in which the policies of state socialist Hungary and the gains of popular and populist pressure on its agrarian policies were being dismantled, but the folk revival was going strong. Examining today's conditions via the lens of the three pillars of interwar populism, I argue that Fidesz' "populism" is a strategy to gain and maintain its unprecedented power in parliament for three terms in a row, which has more in common with the interwar government(s) than with the populists who opposed it.

The Interwar Populist Movement

World War I saw the fall of empires and the establishment of nation-states in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The new nation-state of Hungary that emerged was largely agricultural. This sector employed over 50% of the total labor force, providing over 30% of the national product and over 60% of exports (Kopsidis 2006). It also played an important role in subsistence/reproduction of workers.

By the mid-1930s, with the global depression in full bloom, a network of initiatives, organizations, and practices organized around land reform, the franchise, and cultural validation for the "Three Million Paupers," the third of Hungary's population (67% of the peasant population) comprised of manorial servants, landless and land-poor peasants, and their families (some forced to migrate to urban centers to work) had come to be referred to as the "*népi mozgalom*" (folk/people's/populist/popular

movement).[1] While the movement is often reduced to the prolific and well-known *népi* writers, it was sustained by the many who took part in village visiting, sociography (documenting the conditions of the folk), learning folk knowledges, agitating for land reform and the franchise, and organizing "Folk Colleges" (Taylor 2008a, 2009). Broadly shared elements of the *népi* program included the notion of a third way of development between (Western) capitalism and (Soviet) communism, the vision of a "garden Hungary" that involved forms of democratization and progress that would take the agrarian nature of society into account, and the cooperation of small nations of the Danube Basin.

Mihály Bimbó (2013) stresses that this movement emerged from within counterrevolutionary organizations and argues that it is not possible to understand their program as socialist. "If there is any socialism there," he writes, "it is a romantic socialism, one which does not have anything to say about capitalism or private property. In the face of the erasure of diversity put into place by capitalist and socialist progress alike; in the face of quantity, it proposed quality; diversity."[2] The populist movement was, nevertheless, a radical political voice for land poor and landless agrarian workers in the interwar period. Arguing for a complete overturn of existing property relations, it was also unfriendly to the Bolshevik strategies of concentration of land in the hands of the state and forced cooperativization. The *népi* movement espoused the redistribution of the huge swaths of private property that made up (post)feudal estates and Church holdings, toward the goal of producing a population of smallholders—a "garden Hungary."

Understanding how this "romantic socialist" movement would come to be a main voice of justice for the bulk of the working class in Hungary—and how it came to be conflated with the Christian National, fascist, and National Socialist governments to which it saw itself in opposition—requires setting it in the context of the waves of revolution and counterrevolution that accompanied the reorganization of territories into "nation-states" and their tumultuous incorporation into the world capitalist system.

[1] From György Oláh's 1928 book *The Land of Three Million Paupers.*

[2] My translation.

The term *nép* (volk, folk, people) had a number of overlapping, even competing, meanings: the working class; the majority; the lower strata; those who should have sovereignty in a republic; the oldest layer that preserves the special characteristics unique to the nation, and the ethnos in cultural, racial, or both senses. To many interwar *népi* activists, the *nép* was the mass of rural Hungarians subjected to a neofeudal "middle class" regime of land ownership and labor. To others, the *nép* was (also) those rural Hungarians subjected to an urbanizing process associated with the "bourgeoisie," a group equated with "Jews" and "foreigners." By the mid-1930s, however, the identity of *népi* (of the folk/people) was coming to signify one side in an increasingly hostile series of debates between *népi* and *urbánus* writers playing out in Budapest's rich literary scene, the critical medium of the day. It is this opposition that is usually considered primary today and is thus important in contemporary conflations.

The opposition between these two groupings took shape around their different visions of progress. Both contested the conservative neofeudal interests of the government, espousing democratization, the franchise, and land reform, and a number of them worked together at literary journals and in political parties in the earlier days of this period. Yet some of the most visible *népi* writers made overtly antisemitic comments, while others used the language of "foreign" to talk about Jewish elements of society in their sociological analyses of the peasant question and rural bourgeoisification (see Tóth 2012).[3] These populists highlighted, however, that a good part of the lowest strata of society in Hungary was not an industrial or urban proletariat, but rather, landless agricultural workers and land-poor peasants. They acted in opposition to a nationalist conservative government invested in preserving the feudal property and political privileges of the nobility-derived officer and bureaucratic "middle class."

While the government tried to absorb *népi* energies into its sphere of influence by adopting, imitating, and sponsoring its rhetoric and practices, it never fully succeeded. And while individual *népi* actors came to be associated with antisemitism and some eventually even with the National Socialist Arrow Cross, far more seem to have placed themselves on the left. The most organized and explicitly political of the *népi* efforts

[3] I adopt the convention of using the spelling "antisemitism" from the Jewish Voice for Peace, which highlights the role of pseudo-scientific racism in creating a "Semitic" race. See Jewish Voice for Peace (2017, xv).

were the political mobilizations March Front (1936), the National Peasant Party (NPP), and the movement to found Folk Colleges (later, in the coalition period, NÉKOSZ—the Association of Folk Colleges). The NPP was formed in 1939, with Germany now Hungary's next-door neighbor and as an array of far-right parties fared well in local elections. While remaining illegal (like the Communist Party) until 1945, it joined the antifascist (or perhaps for some, anti-German) Magyar Front in 1944, which unified the parties of the resistance (see Borbándi 1989, 326). It subsequently took part in the ruling coalition that came to power in 1945, from which Communist Party rule would emerge (Borbándi 1989, 344).

The history of leftist movements and their suppression surely shaped the populist movement and its approach to the problem of the people/folk. The Horthy period (1920–1944) began with a "White Terror," consisting of violent attacks on the leftists and Jews that the new "ancien régime blamed for the instability and loss of territory. Tens of thousands were imprisoned, and 5000 were killed (Bodo 2010).[4] While the Communist Party was banned, most "liberal" parties simply dissolved, and the Social Democrats boycotted the 1920 elections in protest of the authoritarian turn. This treatment of leftists was necessary for the consolidation of the regime, precisely because socialism and communism had popular appeal. Interwar populism took the form it did in part because of the suppression of the legacy of socialist and communist politics, as well as the shortcomings of the short-lived 1919 Soviet.

The Radical Reorganization of Territories, Peoples, and Borders

In the context of the Dual Monarchy (1867–1918), absolutism mixed with elements of economic and cultural liberalism, making Hungarian "liberalism" a complex and multi-headed creature. A habit of referring to parties for independence as "radical nationalists" in contrast to the (economic) "liberals" of the Liberal Party controlling parliament can mislead today's readers. In fact, positions ranged from support for remaining within the Empire to support for independence in both monarchist and republican versions. Addressing sovereignty meant addressing the "ethnic diversity" of the Hungarian lands—how to treat the majority of greater

[4] Berend (2001, 140) gives lower estimates.

Hungary's population who did not speak Hungarian as a mother tongue and increasingly agitated for their own states. There were indeed "radical nationalists" (or petite imperialists), who regarded ethnic Hungarians as superior, and deserving to rule over the territory without ceding rights to the "nationalities," while others hoped to convince the latter to remain as equals. Both groups had thinkers who entertained a regional federation of some kind.

At the end of World War I, as during the 1848 Revolution, those who would govern Hungary were confronted anew with the agrarian and national questions. Now, faced by "national" armies supported by the Entente assembled on what would become (more or less) the borders of the new polity, the questions of who would govern, who would be citizens, and what rights they would have were imminent. In March 1918, after the (Habsburg) Emperor and Monarch appointed Count Mihály Károlyi Prime Minister of Hungary, the latter declared a Republic, terminating the union between Austria and Hungary.[5] The victorious Entente demanded immediate surrender of approximately two-thirds of "Hungarian" territory to other nations/nationalities: the region would be carved up into "nation-states."

After the Entente denied a request for a referendum on the postwar boundaries, Károlyi turned power over to a coalition of Social Democrats and Communists who established a Republic of Councils in 1919, the second socialist state in the world. The Soviet too faced the unresolvable problem of the borders, and expected reinforcements from the Soviet in Russia did not materialize. The occupation of Budapest by the Romanian army created the conditions for the counterrevolutionary government, formed in the southern city of Szeged (with the support of powerful landowners, many of whose vast estates lay beyond the Entente-enforced borders, along with millions of ethnic Hungarians) to take power with the help of a "national army." War hero and Admiral Miklós Horthy was installed as regent shortly thereafter.

The Horthy era would last until October 1944, when the regent resigned in the face of a coup by the Arrow Cross Party, supported by the occupying German forces. Horthy's ascendance restored the "ancien régime," "but eliminated its liberal characteristics and institutionalized a conservative, antisemitic oppressive authoritarianism" (Berend 2001,

[5] Hungary had retained a continuous state throughout the period since the kingdom was swallowed up by Empire in 1526.

141). Successive governments represented the class interests and "Christian National" values of the aristocracy, middle nobility, land-holding gentry, and the bureaucratic, military officer, and intellectual layers derived from them, while using irredentist propaganda to promote "national unity." To understand how the Horthy government(s) and populist positions came to be conflated, how they can legitimately be associated, and how the *népi-urbánus* opposition is remembered as primary, let us explore the *népi* movement's three main demands: land reform, the franchise, and cultural validation for the *nép*.

Three Pillars: Land Reform, the Franchise and Political Representation, and Cultural Validation

In 1918, under pressure of mass demonstrations, Károlyi's government had drawn up a land reform program to distribute lay estates exceeding 500 yokes and ecclesiastical estates exceeding 200 to agrarian workers, but the plan was not actualized in the short time this government was in power. Next, the 1919 Soviet decided to nationalize large and medium-sized estates. This alienated many peasants, who, along with other workers, had earlier demanded the Communist Party's rise to power, contributing to their unification with other peasant strata (Romsics 2015, 193). Once Horthy was installed, the National Smallholders and Agricultural Worker's party, the largest party in parliament (1920–1922) pushed for the breakup and redistribution of large estates (Romsics 2015, 191). While the scale of the 1920 land reform was small and the distributed plots (2–3 yokes) insufficient for supporting a family, this action successfully removed land reform from the government agenda.[6]

The franchise was also rolled back. Although, until then, parliamentary parties had represented less than 10% of the (adult male) population, the Károlyi government had extended the franchise to most literate men over 21 and women over 24 (about 50% of the adult population), while also introducing the secret ballot. No elections took place under this government, but many of these gains were preserved in the 1920 elections. By

[6]The 1920 land reform affected only 8.5% of the land and reduced the territory above 1000 yokes by 14% and those between 500 and 1000 yokes by 5.5%, distributing it to 200,000 landless day laborers and more than 100,000 dwarf holders.

the 1922 elections, however, "the right to vote was limited and circumscribed by age, sex, property, educational and other qualifications (e.g., open voting in the countryside), which kept the number of eligible voters between 26.6% and 33.8% of the total population" (Vardy 1983, 10; see also, Harsfalvi 1981). Prime ministers were appointed by the regent.

Meeting the qualifications required to vote would have been particularly difficult for landless agrarian workers, because of land and education requirements. Even those poor peasants eligible to vote were likely affected by the open ballot system exercised outside the cities. Further, having boycotted the 1920 elections, the Social Democratic Party subsequently came to an agreement with the government on terms unfavorable for widespread organizing, especially in the countryside (Berend 2001, 142). Poor agrarian workers were left unrepresented, while Communists and Social Democrats were virtually absent from the agrarian sphere and associated now with urbanists (in contrast to the first decade of the century when the Agrarian Socialist Union boasted upwards of 70,000 members) (Romsics 2015, 175).

Debates between *népi* and *urbánus* writers centered around their respective visions of progress. While they shared interest in land reform, the franchise, and democratic freedoms, they differed on the question of "culture." It is this aspect of *népi* politics that appears to overlap with the politics of successive interwar (and World War II) governments. The "counterrevolutionary organizations" from which the populist movement emerged were in constant flux. With many other social spaces and political activities banned or without support, these organizations hosted many tendencies (see Bimbó 2013). Government support for the activities of such organizations was tied to hopes that "exposure" to the territories of greater Hungary would (re)produce an attachment helpful to irredentist aims. But the "village visiting" activities in which participants (mainly youths) took part, and for which populists were famous, also lent themselves to sympathy with the folk as agrarian workers both oppressed and demeaned by the ruling classes. The same practices could thus serve quite different ideological causes, and the cultivation of a sympathy for peasants via learning their practices (songs, dances, harvesting, etc.) could overlap with nationalist and neo-feudal interests in the absence of a leftist cell and a class analysis.

From the populist position of sympathy with the plight of the agrarian poor, the *urbánus* vision of catching up to the West (or on the other hand, following Soviet Union inspired development) appeared unsympathetic to agrarian workers/peasants. This difference was often framed as a kind of ethnic divide between "authentic" Hungarians and others: populists understood peasants to be knowledge bearers in the sense that Herder did, as bearers of the "national soul." But they were also keen observers of how neofeudal and capitalist elements could be particularly exploitative of agrarian workers.

A growing equation between populism and fascism today relies on covering this populist advocacy for the *nép* with the broad brushstroke of the Christian Nationalist, conservative counterrevolutionary, fascist, and later National Socialist governments and their supporters. Understanding the differences, as well as the overlaps, is aided by attending to what Csaba Tibor Tóth calls a "more complex picture of the Jew," that takes into account both "the acceptance into Hungarian society and the differentiation from Hungarianness" (Tóth 2012, 31).

Until the end of World War I, Hungary had been a deeply "multinational" state, and "ethnic Hungarians" were a minority in the territory of historic Hungary (Kann 1945, 359). While Hungarian political nationalists had alienated the so-called nationalities, they sought and found willing allies for their plans to retain the crownlands as a nation-state in the Jewish population. The 1868 Emancipation of Jews, expressing a commitment to religious equality, was tightly tied to linguistic assimilation, which Jews of local and foreign origins embraced. Through magyarization of Jews, political nationalists of this ilk were able to increase the number of "Hungarians" (measured by mother tongue) in the territories of the Hungarian crownlands, benefitting also from the "nationalist" posture that many of the assimilated adopted (Sakmyster 2006, 159; Kann 1945).

The so-called "liberal" government (mostly conservative except with regard to ideas of free trade) relied on this population as the bourgeoisie that the "middle class" failed to produce. Jews and their converted offspring were visible in the processes of modernization tied to Budapest's turn-of-the-century status as a metropolitan center on the map of European culture. Here, Jews were overrepresented in the professions and at the forefront of both the owning and working classes of industry. Bourgeois Jews were visible in cultural production and politics—in radical bourgeois (liberal), socialist, and communist spheres (Karády 2008) as well as in the *urbánus* camp of writers (Fenyo 1976). These sociological

factors were drawn upon by (some) populists and others to make arguments about Jewish "foreignness," their relation to capitalism and liberalism (as well as socialism and communism), and their distance from the agrarian "people."

The *népi-urbánus* debate was unfolding, however, in a context in which a numerus clausus law had been passed to restrict the numbers of Jews in universities already in 1920, part of the Horthy government's project to replace Jews in these roles with a modernized "national" middle class. As the *népi* movement wanted to see agrarian workers become recognized and entitled to full membership in society (i.e., citizenship), their hopes had the potential to intersect with government policies that promised to assure wellbeing to "Magyars." Pitting "Magyar" against "Jew" or "foreigner" could effectively elide the class problem of the peasantry. This was aided by the fact that the terms "peasant" and "*nép*" could be used to cover a range from the poorest of agrarian workers to the landed gentry, the latter more likely to have some land but, even without it, still likely to bear vestiges of feudal privilege, including employment in the state apparatus.

Populists wished to see agrarian workers and their knowledges valorized in contrast to both the conservative neo-feudal ruling classes and "urbanite" modernizers. While Magyar vs. Jew was one variation, the position that the *nép* was the older and most "Hungarian" layer also justified an antiaristocratic essentialism, this elite, culturally aligned with European nobility and European values, was also a "newer" layer (Taylor 2008b).

The ascent of Mussolini-admirer Gyula Gömbös to prime minister in 1932 marked a shift to the "new guard." A founder of the paramilitary Hungarian Defense Association (MOVE), Gömbös had helped to place Horthy in power, yet he made promises of reform. In 1935, he attempted to convince a group of *népi* writers to join his "New Spiritual Front." While no clear agreement seems to have been come to, and some writers were quite aggressive with the prime minister, their willingness to meet at all explains the escalation of the *népi-urbánus* animosities. For *urbánus* actors, any reproachement with Gömbös meant aligning with a notorious antisemite. This was a man who had once argued openly for antisemitic redistributions, even if he had formally renounced such views upon becoming prime minister and his government even included some Jews. By this time, overlaps were apparent between the government and some *népi* positions, particularly regarding the nation and the role

of Jews in society. The popular *népi* writer László Németh was frequently critiqued by *urbánus* writers for his antisemitic comments and positions that seemed to advocate a broadening of the numerus clausus to the context of cultural production. Urbanite fears that any redistribution in this climate in favor of the nép would take an anti-Jewish form were not lessened by accusations by some populists that they were oversensitive. While it is impossible to know much about the personal positions of the many people who together took part in the various strands of the *népi* movement, Tóth (2012) points out that even the leftist populist sociographer Ferenc Erdei, who treated the agrarian question, tended to work with a binary in which Jews (and with a little stretch all "urbanites" and liberals) were a foreign (new) element. Further, it does not seem there was any attempt to oust the loudly antisemitic characters from populist activities.

After years of flirtation with Germany (including a trade agreement that likely pulled Hungary out of economic crisis), and associated revisionism, the end of the Horthy era was marked by war, the introduction of further antisemitic laws, forced labor and deportations, Nazi occupation, and followed by the application of the Final Solution by the Arrow Cross Party to Budapest's Jews. While interwar populists were first and foremost oriented toward justice for poor agricultural workers in the face of the reproduction of (neo)feudal relations in the countryside under new relationships of capital, the positions of at least some (quite influential) populists contributed to a climate of racial essentialism in which an estimated 50,000 Jews were deported and murdered and the Roma Holocaust was enacted (Karsai 2005).

Postsocialism and the Populism/Antipopulism Dynamic

Today, the terms *nép* (people) and nemzet (nation) are often used interchangeably by Orbán/Fidesz, their competitor, the Jobbik party, and, in fact, many other Hungarians. "Regular people" (az ember -literally: "a person") are often portrayed as rural, agrarian, and provincial, i.e., not urban or cosmopolitan, while "the people" is equated with "the nation." But this is not the reason why the international press and commentators call Orbán and Fidesz populist. Nor is it because Fidesz has pursued policies focused on bettering the lives of the poor and underrepresented, whether rural or urban. Orbán is called a populist because in his style of "constructing the political," he establishes a distinction between two

groups: the people/nation and the elite/foreigner (see Laclau 2005). These characteristics associated with populism as a rhetorical style are combined with other characteristics often associated with the term: Orbán is a demagogue, authoritarian, and pursues "unorthodox economics."

While Hungary's state-territorial borders would remain untouched in 1989, the region faced a new round of radical shifts in the scalar organization of capital; state socialism was over. The Republic of Hungary would be regarded as a liberal democracy until Fidesz rewrote the constitution in 2010. Liberal principles had been adopted in the neoliberalizing era of global capitalism, as the socialist economy was rolled back through the privatization and dismantling of industrial and agricultural enterprises and of land and housing. The establishment of the inviolability of property rights, electoral democracy and civil society, and the overturn of socialist democratic ideals were presented as measures of progress. In the name of democratization, the parties controlling parliament all took part in the (neo)liberalization of the economy. These peripheralizing postsocialist countries lost ground in the hierarchy of the world system, as the "end of history" was declared and socialism deemed an historical aberration.

Communist Party-led socialism had completed Hungary's transformation into an industrialized nation-state that nevertheless remained heavily dependent on agrarian production for export, to subsidize industry, and to reproduce the population. Late socialism was characterized by experiments with a "mixed economy" as the country struggled with changing economic conditions, including the global "oil crisis" and mounting debt. A unique adaptation was the system of private plot production and the subsidiary industrial and semi-industrial production supported by the agricultural cooperatives. As the socialist sector was dismantled, it became apparent that predictions of an easy transition for agrarian "socialist entrepreneurs" were not apt (Szelényi 1988).

Hungary was seen as one of the successes of "the transition," along with the other "Central European" Visegrad nations. It was among the early states of the region to join the EU (but not the Eurozone) in 2004 and agreed to the terms of the Maastricht criteria in preparation to adopt the Euro (which it still has not). Despite claims of success, Eastern European countries remain poorer than those in the Western part of the EU, and Western European capital (German car companies, for example) is deeply involved in labor exploitation there (Gagyi and Gerőcs 2018).

In 1993, a far-right party (MIÉP) had emerged out of a faction expelled by the first post-1989 ruling party, MDF. Together these parties had (re)activated different parts of the national question. MDF's prime minister had stated a responsibility to the 5 million "over the border Hungarians," and MIÉP pointed to Jews as conspirators in the "stolen regime change (Taylor 2008a)." Some viewed this antisemitic position as part of a renewed *népi-urbánus* opposition. But few of these "neopopulists" showed much concern for the well-being of agrarian workers, while the reconstituted Independent Smallholders Party failed at gaining wide membership. People identified with *népi* critique did lament the "loss of tradition" among the agrarian folk in Hungary, but were especially vocal around the issues of (ethnic) Hungarians over the border, particularly the cultural activities of the peasants.

The successor of the Communist Party, now a Euro Socialist Party, MSZP—Hungarian Socialist Party, was the first to lead parliament twice, with Fidesz leading in the term between. At the time of my 2004/2005 fieldwork, I noted a polarization between left and right. By 2006, what Hungarians call "left-liberals" were losing legitimacy, as massive street protests shored up dissatisfaction. MSZP's incumbent election in 2006 was mired in controversy after a recording was circulated of the incumbent prime minister admitting he had lied about the economy to get reelected. Fidesz was able to harness street protests in its favor and won wild support in a referendum challenging austerity measures introduced by MSZP. The Jobbik party, founded in 2003, began to make inroads, organizing rallies (while its paramilitary arm, the Magyar Guard, organized patrols) in depressed regions where tensions were growing between ethnic Hungarian "post peasants" and the largely Roma "surplus population," suturing local experiences into a national rhetoric around "Gypsy crime" (Szombati 2018).

The global economic crisis hit with a vengeance, exacerbating disparities and related anxiety and anger. The third of households who had taken mortgages out in foreign currencies between 2005 and 2008 were left with no way to pay as the forint plummeted. Poverty, homelessness, and unemployment spiraled upward. In the countryside, the continuing impact of the demise of state socialist infrastructure combined with a liberal welfare regime and accession to the EU to underdevelop regions and reethnicize class relations. While Roma were the first to lose their jobs, in the provinces, the liberal style welfare system was seen by struggling "post peasants" (read Magyar) as favoring the "work shy," i.e., Roma (Szombati

2018). Fidesz offered a less radical solution to the problem than Jobbik (Szombati 2018), managing to retain power, and by 2018, Jobbik would attempt a move to the center, even as Fidesz consolidated an increasingly authoritarian form of rule, while relying on ethnonationalist rhetoric and policy.

Conclusion: Examining Today's Populism Through an Interwar Populist Lens

The questions of land reform, the franchise and political representation, and cultural validation can be turned into lenses on the massive transformations in citizenship in a context in which Hungarians expected "democracy" to enhance many benefits of state socialism they took for granted (see Pogotsa's chapter, this volume). The land and property reforms set in motion via "the transition" were in fact a radical rearrangement of citizenship rights and obligations. In the countryside, land privatization was central to this transformation. While the myth of the independent smallholder was embraced with passion, it took some time for rural households to discover the losses associated with the new arrangements. Most found themselves in worse conditions, as the resources provided by socialist institutions dropped off. Despite the returns of property, land became concentrated, either in ownership or in operation.

Employment became a general problem in the countryside, exacerbated by the local manifestations of the global economic crisis. While MSZP established a workfare program toward the end of its last term, it was Fidesz who became famous for it. Critiques have focused on the low pay and the political character of access, yet many rural workers regard workfare positively. For at least some of those in the countryside facing the choice between unemployment and outmigration, this paternalist scheme is a welcome opportunity, which seems to address those without work as well as the "work shy" (Hann 2016, see also Szombati 2018).

Another significant marker of the "transition" was the introduction of electoral democracy and the multiparty system. A "universal franchise" was granted to all citizens above 18, and distance voting is also allowed. Most postsocialist countries have followed the broader trend toward the "postpolitical" (see Mouffe 2016), in which the sense that there are no real options has led to lower voter turnout. Hungary, however, has defied this downward trend (*The Guardian* 2014); voter turnout for parliamentary elections in 2018, in which Fidesz won a two-thirds majority for

a third time in a row, reached around 70% (Mounk 2018). While civic investment in the outcome of elections is clearly shown in these numbers, Fidesz's last two victories have to be read against the far-reaching changes the Orbán governments have made to electoral law since 2011. We also have to take into account the effects of a law passed early after Fidesz's 2010 victory that granted dual citizenship to more than two million "over the border Hungarians," and made it possible for them to vote in Hungarian elections. Over 95% of these nearly 130,000 new citizens voted for Fidesz in 2014 (Simon 2017).

The importance of the franchise is also seen regarding the several referenda that have been voted on since 1989. Referenda have rarely been technically successful in Hungary, as turnout has usually not met the minimum percentage of voters. Nevertheless, putting issues to the electorate in this way can be read as a strategy, just as non-turnout can be read as an abstention. Both in power and in opposition, Fidesz has called on referenda (another measure often associated with populism) to secure a "mandate" on various issues. This method helped the party to establish itself as "anti-system" at the time of the referenda on dual citizenship (2004) and austerity measures (2008). While in power, Fidesz claimed the results of the 2014 referendum on whether the government should adopt the refugee settlement quotas set by the EU as a mandate, despite the fact that it failed to draw enough voters to be valid (About Hungary 2016).

This brings us to the issue of cultural validation. Fidesz is known for its rhetoric defending European and Christian values in light of migration from the East and South and pressure from Brussels to receive migrants. But this ties to a much more complex strategy to which cultural validation is central. The transition was pushed through with a politics of shock therapy—politicians acknowledged that it would be painful and that popular approval was unlikely. Not only did liberal and left politicians (and intellectuals) tend to dismiss popular complaints and demands, they dressed their dismissal with Orientalist ideas of backwardness, whether targeting Eastern or provincial culture or socialist personhood.

By the early 2000s, a binary opposition distinguishing "left-liberal" globalizers from "those who protect the nation" was emerging, with framings introduced by the far right and amplified by Fidesz (Gagyi 2016). The former claimed to defend the "democracy" it imported from the civilized West alongside neoliberal and comprador arrangements, in contrast to what it perceived as the provincial and backward nationalism

of the opposition and the opinions of the citizenry—both marking the Oriental nature of the region and the consequent need to "catch up." While the language of theft was widespread, the language of class was rarely heard, as the two elite blocs competed based on a preference for either "national" or global capital (Gagyi 2016). By 2014, Orbán had consolidated his pursuit of an "illiberal state." His strategies for staying in power would require authoritarian measures, the building of a clientelist network "parasitic" on the state (Martin 2017, Koltai 2018), and the successful reproduction and tightening of the binary between liberal/foreign-minded and illiberal/national. These can be fit into a cascading set of binaries that include liberal-illiberal and *urbánus-népi*.

While, despite his dramatic overtures, Orbán's policies have had little positive effect on the dire conditions of the working classes (urban or rural), his rhetoric animates a cultural validation for those who felt unheard by other politicians. While this distinction need not be a national or ethnic one, Orbán has woven this validation together with a primary opposition of the ethnonation with the foreign, on which a series of cascading oppositions builds. Echoing Horthy's governments, Orbán has set forward the goal of completing the regime change by creating a new "national" middle class. As the "migrant crisis" unfolded in 2015, the Orbán government built fences on the southern borders. It also passed the "Lex CEU," threatening the operation of the American degree-granting Central European University (CEU). Both are framed as protecting the nation against "foreigners," as is the villainization of "foreign-funded" NGOs. These moves work to keep the hegemonic binary between the national and the foreign active and tense. Centering on the figure of the finance capitalist George Soros, a Hungarian of Jewish descent and founder of the CEU and of foundations that have supported liberal and left organizations in Hungary and the region, as a symbol of the "foreign minded," Fidesz has used this binding trope for the attacks on media, NGOs, academics, civil society writ large, the university, and the field of gender studies. This "national" positioning is itself deeply contradictory: when Orbán claims that he is defending "European values," he places Hungary inside Europe, even as Hungarian and other East European migrants themselves

face exploitation and humiliation in the EU's core states (Böröcz and Sarkar 2017).

The interwar *népi* movement pointed to the dire conditions of the agrarian working class and the problem of paths of development in a moment marked by intense political and economic change. The movement not only failed to constructively address the diversity of the population (they basically ignored the plight of Roma, who were neither regarded as ethnic Magyar nor as a nationality, for example), but also contributed to the climate of antisemitism that justified the Shoah. In this way, Orbán's "populism," with its spurious nation-foreigner opposition, seems to be part of a "populist" (*népi*) tradition dating to the interwar period. But Orbán's "populism," also developed in a period marked by intense change, is, in contrast, the political strategy of a politician and his party seeking to maintain political power. It is a far cry from interwar *népi* commitment to rights for agrarian workers. Yes, these workers were seen as ethnic Hungarians, but they were denied those rights and freedoms by ethnic Hungarians in power, a neo-feudal group that sought to maintain its own privileged position while using national rhetoric to gain the allegiance of those they oppressed. Despite the evident overlaps, and the very real problems and consequences of ethnonational essentialism, to equate the interwar populist movement with the interwar governments deprives us of the opportunity to see how other formations might have emerged. Likewise, if we are too quick to adopt a liberal antipopulist stance, conflating the legitimate concerns of many Hungarians with the strategies of Fidesz, we will miss out on the nuances that distinguish groups that might or might not be woven together into a historical bloc. In 1957, Karl (Károlyi) Polányi (the converted child of a Hungarian Jew and the daughter of a teacher in a Vilnius rabbinical seminary) wrote, "By accident only … was European fascism in the twenties connected with national and counterrevolutionary tendencies. It was a case of symbiosis between movements of independent origin" (1957, 242). Extending his analysis to include the interwar populists, we conclude that understanding such contingencies is an important analytical and political task. Let us try to do the same with regard to the present.

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Fig. 10.1 Jair Bonsonaro, President of Brazil (2019)

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CHAPTER 10

Bolsonaro: Politics as Permanent Crisis

Benjamin Fogel

At the dawn of the twentieth century, Brazil was what the economist Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira terms "an agricultural mercantile economy and … a class-based society that had barely emerged from slavery" (Bresser-Pereira 2009). Nearly 120 years later, Brazil is in the midst of its third attempt at democracy. The country is today a postindustrial economy integrated into global capitalism and presided over by a centralized state. Brazilian society, while in many ways open, informal, and warm, is still characterized by extreme levels of inequality, repression, and violence.

The transformation of Brazil from the backward fiefdoms of various oligarchies into a major economy with aspirations of becoming a major international power began in the 1930s, a decade that saw civil war, coups, the emergence of the working class as a political actor, and the foundations of a truly national culture under the leadership of the dictator Getúlio Vargas. Authoritarian, opportunistic, and manipulative, Vargas presided over the centralization of the Brazilian state and rapid industrialization, while expanding a limited version of social citizenship that included Brazil's emerging working class. Like Argentine leader Juan Perón, Vargas was branded as a

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_10

populist because he justified his rule through appeal to the popular classes, both through discourse and practices that extended social citizenship, by including them as part of the nation that was being built. However, unlike Perón, Vargas lacked personal charisma and flamboyance.

In Bresser-Pereira's words, the 1930s saw one of the most profound and deep-reaching structural transformations in the history of the country, from what he terms a "patrimonial" to a "managerial" state (Bresser-Pereira 2009). Politics, to a degree, ceased to be only for the elites, and the foundations for mass participation were laid, albeit under an authoritarian government. The 1930s defined modern Brazil, with all its contradictions and subtleties.

In 2018, Brazil elected the extreme right-wing former army captain-turned-congressman Jair Bolsonaro, after 13 years of social democratic rule under successive Workers Party (PT) governments. It is almost impossible to talk about Bolsonaro without mentioning fascism, as politicians, social movements, and journalists alike have labeled him a "fascist," "protofascist," or "neofascist." His strongman image, advocacy of a militarized politics—his major campaign platform was to increase extrajudicial killings of suspected criminals—against his political enemies, along with his open support of torture and racism at times closely resembles classical fascism (Fig. 10.1).

Bolsonaro was able to win over a significant part of the electorate, because he was able to combine a familiar morally conservative discourse with an ultra-liberal economic platform: ending "corruption" was portrayed as the solution to all of Brazil's problems. The familiarity of this discourse is in part due to its frequent usage during past moments of historical crisis, including in the run-up to the 1964 military coup and the political battles that defined the 1930s.

Anticorruption in practice amounts to the dismantling of the PT's legacy in power and the positive aspects of the constitutional pact forged in 1988, but as I will argue in this essay, Bolsonaro's project goes further, seeking to reverse the social compact at the core of the process of state formation initiated in the 1930s. That compact had space for the political inclusion of the working class along with the creation of a (limited) welfare state. The president occupies a familiar role in Brazilian history—as the *capitão do mato*, the goon; the hired muscle tasked with keeping the slaves in line on behalf of the masters. As Pinheiro notes, "Because of the unwillingness of the ruling classes in a democracy to transform the order bequeathed by preceding authoritarian regimes, the unreformed institutions are inadequate to control or overcome the forms of incivility present in Brazilian society, which are always worse

after the exceptional regimes. Indeed, the succession of each authoritarian period, untouched by the governments that arise in the periods of democratic transitions, reactivates and deepens the authoritarian legacy" (Pinheiro 2009, 201).

In this sense, Bolsonaro's political project amounts to an attempt to return the slaves to the *senzela* (slave quarters), decentralize and unmake Brazil's "welfare state," and break the social compact crafted during the 1930s once and for all. In other words, to force the masses back into their rightful place, after the exception of a democratic project that attempted to expand social citizenship.

The Politics of the 1930s

The 1930s kicked off with the fall of Brazil's First Republic, commonly known as the Old Republic, a nominally democratic constitutional order. The Old Republic was inaugurated in 1889 through a military coup that deposed Emperor Dom Pedro II, and it ended in much the same fashion through another military coup (dubbed "a revolution") that placed the defeated candidate in that year's election—a lawyer, landowner, and failed military officer from the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul—in the presidency, a position he would occupy before being removed by yet another military coup in 1945. The Old Republic was inspired by the positivist philosophy of Auguste Comte and proclaimed itself to stand for *ordem e progresso* (order and progress), but both proved to be rare commodities throughout its 40-year history.

The political system of the Old Republic was dominated by the oligarchies that controlled Brazil's two most populous states: São Paulo and Minas Gerais, which alternated the position of president between them. The system was known as *café com leite* (coffee with milk) referring to the primary agricultural products of their respective economies. The political regime established in the 1891 constitution—of course under the guidance of the military—granted significant power to Brazil's twenty states, including the right to tax exports, secure external loans, and raise their own armed forces, as well as to dismantle the limited process of centralization experienced under monarchical rule.

In several important respects, the regime was arguably even less democratic than Brazil's Empire: the right to vote was restricted to those over the age of twenty-one who could read and write in a country with over 85% illiteracy. Insurrections were common, elections were mostly shams,

and the results were decided by elites long before those who could vote could cast their ballots. There was little or no effort to educate Brazil's population or register voters, giving rise to a political system with even less popular participation than the monarchy (Bethell 2008, 6). The federal structure explicitly favored privileged groups, particularly state governors who won uncontested elections. The countryside was left to be ruled by local bosses, who took responsibility for keeping the popular classes in line and paying the costs for the goons needed to accomplish this task. This took the form of a "politics of the governors," in which the local ruling parties were not contested and could always count on a harmless federal government in the face of arbitrary regional and local power. In this period, widespread areas of the countryside were abandoned to arbitary rule by the local bosses or *coronéis* (colonels), while the state and federal governments looked the other way at their abuses in a perverse delegation of power (Bethell 2008, 8).

The Old Republic came to an end in the wake of the Great Depression, as the Brazilian economy was thrown into crisis by the collapse of coffee prices and a political crisis after the *paulista* then-President Washington Luis broke with the system that alternated power between São Paulo and Minas Gerais by nominating another *paulista* Julio Prestes instead of a *mineiro*. The dire economic situation and the political crisis initiated by Luis's ill-fated move shattered the political compact that had kept the republic together. The result was the formation of a new power bloc. A new coalition formed by the Minas Gerais, the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, and northeastern state of Paraiba united behind the candidacy of Vargas and resulted in an actually competitive election. Prestes won the election, and in a Brazilian political custom which continues to this day, the opposition declared the elections a fraud, a claim which was bolstered by the murder of João Pessoa, Vargas's running mate. Except this time, the leaders of the military coup declared it a revolution and elevated Vargas to the presidency as the leader of a provisional government.

The "revolution of 1930" was more than merely a shift in the balance of power between regional elites; it brought into power a political regime that centralized power at the expense of state autonomy. It weakened Brazil's various regional oligarchies, destroying the liberal constitutionalist and nominally democratic government, while empowering the army (Bethell 2008, 4). Like the revolution that ended the monarchy, this was a revolution without any popular participation, the product of competing elite intrigues and factional maneuvering.

The movement of 1930 was contradictory. It had liberal democratic goals while protesting "farcical" elections and proposed broadening the electorate while introducing a secret ballot. It pushed to grant amnesty for political prisoners and sought to weaken the oligarchies. However, leading civilian participants in the movement were members of local oligarchies, including Vargas himself, and came to power through the support of a military demanding increased resources and powers rather than any sort of appeal to the populace.

In 1934, a new constitution was introduced, and Vargas governed as a president elected by a constituent assembly, along with a democratically elected legislature, but the seeds of outright dictatorship had already been sown. Vargas's rule during this period was inspired by elements of European fascism and economic nationalism, rejecting the liberal capitalism of the old oligarchies that positioned Brazil as primarily dependent on commodity exports. It diminished the powers of states while introducing the foundations of a welfare state.

Facing a new electoral challenge in 1937, Vargas secured his position as dictator through a military coup, citing the threat of "communism" and the necessity of creating a national culture uncorrupted by the toxic influence of liberalism. The final result was the establishment of the authoritarian Estado Novo (New State) in 1937, which dissolved the constituent assembly, created a de facto police state, curtailed judicial independence, and established a new, more interventionist role for the state in the economy. The 1937 constitution was a "phantom constitution" only existing on paper, subject to Vargas. The congress did not meet again until end of the Estado Novo.

The Vargas era brought about three major changes in the power structure of Brazil: it saw the entry of the army as a substantive part of the power alliance at the expense of regional oligarchies, power was for the first time centralized, and for the first time in Brazilian history, social citizenship was extended—albeit in a decidedly limited fashion—to the popular classes. The federal state that was created was authoritarian, but it actively intervened to further a national project rather than serving the particular interests of regional oligarchies.

Social Citizenship and Its Discontents

Vargas, in a dramatic break with precedent, actually kept some of his promises to popular groups, despite the opposition of industrialists. Federal agencies were given new powers to set controls on agricultural production, exchange rates, and commodity prices. Additional agencies were created to set in motion national policies in education, health, labor relations, industrial policy, and commerce. The state attempted to reduce rural poverty, eliminate disease, and crush the rampant banditry that plagued the interior of the country. The right to vote was extended to women, and a new labor regime was crafted under the guidance of the state (Williams 2001, 16). The state-building that defined the 1930s was authoritarian, but its actions were also against the interests of much of the bourgeoisie and rural landlords.

Brazil had a history of labor militancy and trade union mobilization, often under the leadership of anarchists and communists, but trade unions were greatly weakened by state repression in the 1920s and economic crisis. The Communist Party had been brutally repressed in 1935, and sympathizers were purged from trade unions, while broad repression had reduced previously effective unions to skeletal structures that only existed on paper (Weinstein 1996, 82). However, the Vargas era also marked a significant period of victories for the working class. A Ministry of Labor was established for the first time in the history of the country, with legislation introduced at the same time, including the eight-hour day, holidays with pay, protection for women and minors, along with the extension of retirement pensions to whole sectors of workers. Minimum wage legislation was introduced, even if it only applied to urban workers employed in the formal sectors; rural workers and those trapped in the informal sector, such as domestic workers, were ignored. A new trade union movement was formed by the state through a new hierarchical system of unions and federations for both workers and employers. The leaders of trade unions were directly appointed by the Ministry of Labor and were under its strict control, compared to industrialists' associations (Weinstein 1996, 51). While the labor relations framework introduced was authoritarian and limited, it advanced for the first time in Brazilian history the idea that were could be a popular base for the state, and that the state should actively intervene to further their interests.

The broadening of social citizenship went beyond the creation of a limited welfare state and introducing a new labor regime; as the

historian Daryl Williams chronicles, Afro-Brazilian forms of cultural expression, which had been repressed by the state—in particular samba—were promoted as representative of a specifically Brazilian national identity. The regime integrated cultural programming into the daily activities of the state, creating cultural managers tasked with spreading and institutionalizing cultural activities deemed authentic expressions of a new national ethos. Over two dozen federal institutions tending to the arts, history, and civil culture were created. The government invested significantly in creating a truly national culture, while incorporating elements of the modernist cultural vanguard (Williams 2001, 14). Under the monarchy and the Old Republic, there was little to no effort to forge a national identity, for instance, education was by and large neglected—the first Brazilian university was only established in 1920—and regionalist sentiments prevailed over the idea of a Brazilian nation. While paternalistic and occasionally xenophobic, the regime, unlike the regional oligarchies, was not explicitly racist or grounded in regional chauvinism.

Brazil's nation-building project portrayed the country as a racial democracy—a racially fluid, open, and tolerant society, in contrast to the self-narratives of oligarchies that celebrated their claim to modernity through their "European" or white legacy. This vision of Brazil was grounded in the notion that the mixing of races contained the sui generis of Brazil's future, even if the myth of racial democracy resulted in ahistorical celebration of the Brazilian plantation and "soft slavery" compared to "hard slavery" of the United States. For Weinstein, racism and racist practices were embedded in notions of regional supremacy or exceptionalism rather than explicitly racist discourses (Weinstein 2015, 13).

São Paulo industrialists, despite the agrarian focus of the states' political class, still assumed their state was the most progressive and productive state in Brazil (Weinstein 1996, 58). Rather than being active participants in the creation of a developmental state, *paulista* industrialists actively resisted these efforts. Later, the Estado Novo saw a stronger alliance between the state and certain industrialists such as the legendary *paulista* businessman Roberto Simonen—a key political figure and founding member of Brazil's most important industrialist association—the Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo. The centralization of the Brazilian state cannot be disconnected from the broadening of social citizenship; these both met with significant resistance, most importantly in the 1932 civil war initiated by São Paulo against Vargas, remembered as the Constitutionalist Revolt (a short civil war that lasted eighty-five

days). The war saw the use of heavy artillery, massed infantry charges on entrenched positions, and even aerial bombardments. Casualty estimates range from 3000 to 15,000 (Bethell 2008, 29). The forces of São Paulo were swiftly routed by federal troops.

The revolt was justified as a defense of the liberal constitution against the barbaric forces of disorder represented by Vargas. However, in reality it was the rebellion of oligarchy angered by the curtailment of their power by a centralized state that included the popular classes as part of its constituency. The imagery that characterized this failed revolt was of a whiter middle class resisting the state forces of darker troops of the northeast. In Weinstein's words, "the 'democracy' championed in 1932 as the opposite of leftist political projects and warned that it was being undermined by populist appeals, political reforms, and campaigns to extend the vote to illiterates" (Weinstein 2015, 338). This had profound historical repercussions in shaping the type of middle-class politics, based in a narrative of moral superiority and the defense of law and order against "dictatorship," even if the middle class had no fondness for democracy. This was a kind of democracy-based exclusion of the popular classes from political participation through repression. The dominant trope of an enlightened middle-class resisting barbarism was employed whenever hierarchies considered natural came under attack.

In sum, the authoritarian state that Vargas constructed actively intervened on behalf of the popular classes at the expense of regional oligarchies. Centralization and the construction of a reformist state were resisted by the regional oligarchies in the name of democracy and liberalism. This democracy that had no space for the popular classes was based upon a liberalism that was itself premised on the violent repression of the popular classes. Since the 1930s, there has always been a faction of the Brazilian elite that has sought to overturn both the centralization and broadening of social citizenship that took place during the 1930s. In 2018, this faction found a new figure to rally behind in Bolsonaro.

The Roots of Bolsonarismo

One of the less remarked-upon factors in the rise of Bolsonaro was the extraordinary degree of elite unity that propelled him to the presidency. All major factions of the dominant Brazilian power bloc backed the former army captain, known as *Mito* (legend) to his supporters. The power bloc is divided principally between two factions of the bourgeoisie: large domestic capital and internationalized capital. Domestic capital includes large firms in manufacturing, construction, agribusiness, and food processing, while internationalized capital encompasses the local representatives of economic entities owned by foreign capital and domestic firms linked to or dependent on them, such as international banks, large consulting and accounting firms, international and transnationally integrated manufacturing firms, as well as mainstream media. This is made even more curious by the fact that capital prospered under PT governments; as Lula liked to say, "I doubt they ever managed to enjoy such respect or that they ever made more money" (under PT rule). The most vocal backers of Bolsonaro, however, were found among the upper middle class—the whitest and best educated sections of Brazil found their collective political voice and voted for Bolsonaro en masse.

The reasons for the extraordinary degree of unity behind Bolsonaro are complicated and beyond the scope of this essay, but I want to end this essay by making the case that we can understand the Bolsonaro coalition and the political project he represents by making reference to the 1930s.

In his 2019 *The New Faces of Fascism*, the Italian historian Enzo Traverso uses the term "postfascism" to define the new wave of right-wing movements transforming global politics, from Salvini to Trump. For Traverso, these movements differ substantially from classical fascism, most notably due to the lack of any real socialist or communist threat (Traverso 2018). Although it is impossible to understand and define such political tendencies without comparisons to classical fascism, comparisons to Brazil's homegrown fascist movement, the Integralistas, have only limited value in helping us understand Bolsonaro.

The Integralistas movement was founded by the *paulista* journalist Plínio Salgado in São Paulo in October 1932. It was the first political organization created after the 1932 civil war. It quickly recruited 100,000 members, mainly in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, while finding further support in the South, with its high proportion of German descendants. Integralista ideology emerged out of the conservative Brazilian nationalism that had manifested in the arts, press, and student movement, incorporating European—primarily Italian fascist—influences (Bethell 2008, 35–36). While Vargas flirted with fascist ideas and for some time sought to position himself equidistantly from Nazi Germany and the West, he eventually allied himself with the United States and crushed the Integralistas through one of his trademark intrigues. While the blend of fascist ideology and Brazilian nationalism bears some similarities to Bolsonaro, fundamentally it is in the anti-Vargas movements of the 1930s that allows us to understand the genesis of Bolsonarismo.

Bolsonaro's own politics combines the anti-Left bloodlust of Operation Condor—the US-backed campaign of political repression and state terror against Latin America's Left that raged through the 1970s and '80s—with contemporary reactionary obsessions, such as "globalism" and "cultural Marxism." He makes no attempt to hide his authoritarianism and makes explicit his support for torture and extrajudicial killing. However, fascism cannot be reduced to the temperament of a particular leader. On the other hand, his aggressive antileftism makes Bolsonaro's worldview more akin to classical fascism. His revanchism seems gratuitous, being primarily targeted not at an armed, radical, or antidemocratic left, but at the relatively moderate social democrats of the PT.

Bolsonaro was propelled to the public stage through the mass anticorruption movement that took to the streets in 2015 and 2016, following the electoral victory of Dilma Rousseff in 2014—declared fraudulent by the opposition. This predominantly upper middle-class movement was cheered on and in large part coordinated by the mainstream media and important sections of capital. This social group had long been hostile to the PT, perceiving its relative privilege under threat by the PT's expansion of credit, rising minimum wages, and increased access to education. Other measures, such as the introduction of minimum wages for domestic workers and quotas at Brazil's elite public universities, further angered the upper middle class. Anxious about its economic and cultural position,

the upper middle class became the most visible base of the anticorruption movement. Like its counterparts in the Constitutionalist Revolt of 1932, the upper middle class took upon itself the role of the moral voice of society, using anticorruption to express hostility to measures that upset the "natural" order of things—most importantly the expansion of social citizenship.

Bolsonaro did not campaign to create jobs or deliver public goods to the Brazilian people. Instead, he promised two things: he would undo the work of the PT and remove any lingering restrictions on state violence. Among a population that in large part believes that government consists only in corruption, incompetence, and non-accountability and that power only consists of conspiracies of unaccountable elites that care little for the concerns of ordinary people, this platform found resonance. Bolsonaro promised to dismantle government and shoot his way through Brazil's problems, rather than promising things that only make people's lives worse.

Bolsonaro's election was preceded by an inferno which destroyed one of the great national symbols inaugurated during the Vargas era, Brazil's national museum in Rio de Janeiro—a fire caused by systemic state underfunding and indifference to multiple warnings from the museum's staff. The fire itself met with little more than shrug from Brazil's elite, never too concerned with such projects. If anything, the inferno serves as a poignant metaphor for what his project seeks to accomplish. This undoing goes beyond merely the work of the PT, but against the whole trajectory of broadening social citizenship through an interventionist state. Given this context, the 1930s finds new resonance in the resistance of the oligarchy toward this project. For instance, in one of Bolsonaro's first acts after assuming office, he closed the Ministry of Labor. This project of undoing has resulted in a cabinet staffed by a Minister of Education committed to destroying public education, a Minister of the Environment more hostile to the environment than the Minister of Agriculture, and (until his resignation) a Minister of Justice—former judge Sergio Moro—whose legacy is the destruction of the rule of law in Brazil.

This project of undoing seeks to dismantle Brazil's constitutional democracy or any limits placed on state repression and elite accumulation. A constitution famously described by Roberto Campos, the architect of the military dictatorship's policy, as possessing "clauses on employment worthy of Cuba, on foreign enterprise reminiscent of Romania, on freedom of property fit for Guinea–Bissau" and "not the faintest odor of

civilization," in reality, the 1988 constitution offered a number of important concessions in terms of social rights but preserved the unwieldy and unequal political system created by the dictatorship. But it is still in the crosshairs of Bolsonaro's government.

Conclusion

As Enzo Traveso frames it, "should we consider the rise of the new right on a global scale as a return to the classical fascism of the 1930s, or rather as a completely new phenomenon" (Traverso 2019)? In the case of Brazil, we can view an altogether different phenomenon—the roots of Bolsonarismo can be in part traced to the 1930s liberal opposition to the Vargas dictatorship.

While there are certainly overt similarities between the fascist Integralistas and Bolsonaro's ideology, much of his appeal to key sectors of Brazilian society is not based on support for an explicitly fascist ideology. Bolsonaro's support among Brazil's power bloc along with the upper middle class is rooted in a fundamental hostility to the expansion of social citizenship inaugurated by Vargas and reaching historic levels under the PT. This hostility has always been expressed in the language of defending democracy, constitutional rule, liberty, and the markets against demagoguery, corruption, and dictatorship. It is, in essence, a moralism rooted in the defense of inequality.

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Fig. 11.1 March against fascism in Dusseldorf, Germany (2016)

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CHAPTER 11

Antifascist Strategy Today: Lineages of Anticommunism and "Militant Democracy" in Eastern Europe

Saygun Gökarıksel

The interwar period has recently received much attention across Europe. The current wave of right-wing governments and far-right groups, as in Hungary and Poland, that openly employ the ideas and symbols of interwar fascist groups, has triggered comparisons and analogies between today's anticommunism and interwar anticommunism or "classical" fascism.[1] In a similar vein, liberal groups in their so-called "defense"

[1] See, e.g., Enzo Traverso (2019) for an insightful discussion of the present-day far-right or "post-fascist" groups from a historical perspective. See also the special issue of *Praktyka Teoretyczna* (2019) on anticommunism, and Weronika Grzebalska et al. (2017) for a useful overview of anticommunism and the current right-wing offensive against "gender ideology" in Eastern Europe.

This essay has benefited greatly from the insightful comments of Jeremy Rayner and the contributions of the participants of Historical Materialism conference in Athens (May 2019), especially Ewa Majewska and Mikołaj Ratajczak. I also thank Susan Falls, George Souvlis, and Taylor Nelms for their editorial labor. All translations from Polish are mine unless otherwise noted.

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_11

of democracy against right-wing authoritarianism often invoke interwar political imaginaries, especially the terms of the legal-political doctrine of "militant democracy."[2] For instance, thirty well-known intellectuals, many of them from Eastern Europe, recently signed a manifesto on the eve of the 2019 European elections against what they see as the new "signs of totalitarianism," the "false prophets who are drunk on resentment." "Three-quarters of a century after the defeat of fascism and thirty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall," the manifesto read, "there is a new battle for civilization …. We must now fight for the idea of Europe or see it perish beneath the waves of populism"[3] (Fig. 11.1).

While this manifesto did not diminish the influence of "Euroskeptic" nationalists in the elections, it expressed clearly the fundamentals of the dominant liberal moral-political imagination that uses the interwar as a transhistorical moral tale or scare word against the "dangers" of fascism and communism, which it typically conflates, often under the tired term "totalitarianism."[4] It is not a coincidence that the media news that presented the manifesto carried the widely circulated image from a 2018 protest in Dusseldorf, which showed the Polish and Hungarian leaders Jarosław Kaczyński and Viktor Orbán embracing each other like the hammer and sickle.[5] But the manifesto also indicates the security-centered vision underlying this call for a new battle. The choice of words, filled with fire alarms, as is typical in militant democracy discourse, is not exceptional, but has rather long been part of the liberal commonsense and arrangement of power.

[2] See, e.g., Weronika Grzebalska et al. (2017), Timothy Garton Ash (2018), and Tom Ginsburg and Aziz Huq (2018) for a discussion of liberal mobilizations of "democratic defense" in Eastern Europe and beyond.

[3] https:// www. theguardian. com/ commentisfree/ 2019/ jan/ 25/ fight- europe- wreckers- patriots- nationalist (last accessed 25 August 2019).

[4] In Poland and Hungary, "Euro-skeptic" right-wing parties came first in the elections. Across the European Union, however, both Euro-skeptic and Green parties overall increased their votes, while the support for center-parties decreased. See https:// www. nytimes. com/ 2019/ 05/ 28/ opinion/ european- elections. html (last accessed 25 August 2019).

[5] The image was published by Guardian: https:// www. theguardian. com/ world/ 2019/ jan/ 25/ europe- coming- apart- before- our- eyes- say- 30- top- intellectuals (last accessed 22 September 2019).

Here, I offer a critique of such invocations of the interwar. Many of those invocations not only miss the historical specificity of the current moment and fail as a guide to popular political strategy,[6] but they are actually part of the problem, the same political context that nourishes reactionary right-wing authoritarianism. On the basis of my research in Poland and Eastern Europe, I suggest that the historical lineages of anticommunism and the security logic underlying both right-wing authoritarianism and the liberal "defense" of democracy need to be examined more dynamically, with a focus on the shifting conjunctures of social and class struggle and the material constellations of legal and political economic institutions of power. I focus on the following questions: What is "anticommunism after communism," after the fall of state communism and the world communist movement?[7] Is this "anticommunism without communists" analogous to "class struggle without class" or "antisemitism without Jews" in its logical construction and mode of operation? How might the interwar legal-political discourse and institutional practice of "militant democracy" relate to anticommunism? What does it do in the post-Cold War context of law and neoliberalization?

Exploring these questions, my aim is not merely a scholastic exercise of teasing out the correct empirical connections between the present-day and interwar Eastern Europe in terms of anticommunism and liberal security mechanisms. With this inquiry, I hope to contribute to the question of political strategy. I argue that it is not sufficient to denounce right-wing authoritarian populism or neo-/postfascism and join the current calls for the defense of liberal democracy, but that one must reckon with and critically engage the authoritarian tendencies embedded in liberalism itself (and their persistence within neoliberalism), specifically the security mechanisms that install sovereign forms of power and control. The current defense of democracy basically means the defense of the status quo, the same context that generated the popular force of right-wing authoritarianism: the undelivered promises of liberalism and the reproduction

[6] See Dylan Riley (2018) for a similar critique of the easy analogies made between interwar fascism and current right-wing populism. His focus is on the liberal commentaries about US President Donald Trump.

[7] Here, I use the term state communism to refer to the Soviet bloc states. That is because those states and their ruling parties identified with the communist horizon even though the actually existing system was apparently not communist. I also use that term interchangeably with "state socialism," which is a more objective description of the Soviet bloc regimes with respect to classical Marxist-Leninism.

of privileges and inequalities in a system that claims to establish freedom, prosperity, and democracy for all citizens.[8]

Anticommunism is a key, in this respect. It is shared by both liberal and right-wing groups, albeit in different forms. The more or less subtle existence, if not prevalence, of anticommunism is important not only for communists or socialists, but for everyone concerned about egalitarian-liberatory democratic politics worthy of the name. Anticommunism "is a dog," Jean-Paul Sartre famously wrote to denounce the anticommunist repression and particularly, the police violence against the anti-NATO demonstration that took place in Paris in 1952 (Birchall 2004, 134). Stretching this saying, we can say that this dog is, above all, one that barks at all those people that are marginalized, dispossessed, purged, or banned from the body politic to defend the master or existing order. It protects the established borders from the morally impure and politically dangerous. Further, anticommunism is also important, because it shifts the attention away from the structural critique of capitalism and delimits the imagination of what is possible in terms of praxis and social transformation beyond the current political impasse produced by liberal and right-wing blocs in the face of neoliberalization and nationalist sovereignty politics.

The time-space of Eastern Europe offers crucial insight into the historical lineages of anticommunism and the current dilemmas of strategy in the absence of effective (popular) left politics. The history of Eastern Europe has seen radical political experiments, such as the socialist revolution and fascist counterrevolution, as well as centuries-long colonial-capitalist domination, subjugation, and exploitation of its subaltern classes. When state communism fell in 1989–1991, many dissidents and pundits across the region and the West rushed to celebrate the irresistible march of capitalism, democracy, and the rule of law. Poland has occupied a special position as a host to a massive labor movement (Solidarity) that shook the party-state, as well as the tragic defeat of that movement and its absorption into neoliberal nation-state building after 1989. Today, it is also Poland, together with Hungary, that Western commentators hail as the

[8] For a discussion of liberalism's theoretical and historical contradictions, see Domenico Losurdo (2005) that shows the way liberal groups across history justified inequality and oppression, while embracing universal freedom and equality, by invoking "exclusive clauses" (exceptions), as is manifest in the history of slavery and colonialism and emergency rules.

harbinger of right-wing authoritarianism in the world. Liberal triumphalism is being replaced by the dystopias of collapse, on the one hand, and a search for antifascist strategy, on the other. This paper hopes to contribute to that search, to the "invention of the unknown," as Daniel Bensaid would say (cited in Sotiris 2019, 7).

The Historical Forms of Anticommunism

Contemporary anticommunism may be thought of as an amalgamation of different historical forms of anticommunism formed in distinct periods: interwar anticommunism, which mainly revolves around the October Revolution and its international politics; Cold War anticommunism, which refers to a more institutionalized, state-centered anticommunism articulated within the entrenched divisions of the world into socialist and capitalist blocs; and finally, post-Cold War anticommunism, which emerged in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc and the world communist movement, together with the rise of globalized neoliberalization and the increasing juridification or constitutionalization of politics and history—the so-called "rights revolution."

The history of anticommunism is dialectically related to the history of communism. Anticommunism has emerged in response to communism, the historical experience of which it, in turn, has shaped (Smith 2014). In this respect, the interwar stands out as the key period, since it is largely in response to the world historical event of the October Revolution—the first socialist revolution in the world—that the affective, political, and legal mechanisms and discourses of anticommunism became articulated. But the history of communism, of course, did not begin with the October Revolution.

Etienne Balibar's approach to communism is useful here. Communism, in his view, could be understood in three main ways, which he distinguishes for analytical purposes (Marxian understandings of communism certainly conceive them as inextricably interrelated in theory and practice): as an idea/ideology, a movement, and a state system/parties (2003, 86–89).[9] While the idea of communism might be traced back to medieval Christianity, its modern political form, which envisions social bonds

[9]While making these distinctions, Etienne Balibar suggests that the idea of communism cannot be thought apart from its concrete practice and realization, from its "real movement," as Marx and Engels have it (1974, 56–57). In this sense, Balibar also challenges

devoid of exploitative, alienating, and unequal relations and embedded in cooperation, gained coherence in the nineteenth century, with the emergence of the communist movement and the organized struggle of workers around 1848 and, later, the Paris Commune (Praktyka Teoretyczna 2019, 8).[10] It was during this time that anticommunism emerged as a specific mode of discourse, and it was at that time mainly articulated by other left groups, especially socialists (ibid., 7).

However, it is largely with the October Revolution that anticommunism formed into a fully fledged discourse, dominated by right-wing conservative and liberal forces, which aimed to contain the "communist threat" unleashed by the October Revolution. The anticolonial and anti-imperialist thrust of the October Revolution contributed to the expansion of communism's influence across the world, which in turn encouraged anticommunism to target the liberation struggles and decolonization processes in the South, portraying them as mere Soviet puppets. Thereby, anticommunism became a truly global endeavor.[11]

In this anticommunist imaginary, there is no shortage of representations of Soviet communism as a bestial, devilish, and diabolical entity to be diminished, attacked, and destroyed. "Judeo-Bolshevism" historically occupied a prominent place in this imaginary. This myth, which racializes the political enemy, still commands much influence in Eastern Europe, nourishing the anticommunist imagination of power, purity, and morality

the glib treatments of the end of Soviet communism as just a matter of the end of a state system, which leaves intact the idea/ideology and movement of communism.

[10] See also Stephen Smith (2014) for a comprehensive volume on the global history of communism in the twentieth century.

[11] Ralph Miliband and Marcel Liebman have well expressed the prominent place of the October Revolution in world politics: "Ever since the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, anticommunism has been a dominant theme in the political warfare waged by conservative forces against the entire left, communist and non-communist; at no time since 1917 has anticommunism failed to occupy a major, even a central, place in the politics and policies of the capitalist world" (1984, 9). Certainly, the Maoist revolution in China and other revolutionary struggles in the South also contributed to the global expansion of anticommunism, but the October Revolution was arguably the most influential event, at least during the interwar period. See, for instance, Walter Rodney's (2018) reflections on the importance of the October Revolution for the Third World, which was both material and ideological. It not only hinted at the possibility of socialist revolution (human liberation) in the colonized world, but also developed international platforms such as the Third International (Comintern) that brought together anticolonial, socialist, and communist organizations and movements across the world.

that unleashed massive violence in the interwar period and onward. Today, it is invoked not only by nationalist historians and politicians, but also by far-right groups, whether in Poland, Hungary, or Romania (Hanebrink 2018; Traverso 2019), as I discuss in more detail below.

The Judeo-Bolshevism myth coexisted with other ethnic or racial representations of communism, particular to other national contexts and which flourished in the interwar period. In Poland, communism had been generally orientalized as Russian, emanating from the more "primitive" East (Bernacki 2000, 54). For instance, in 1919, right after the establishment of the modern Polish nation-state, General Jozef Piłsudski notoriously called communism a "plain Russian sickness" (Chojnowski 2000, 99). This anticommunism did not just operate on the plane of representation, however. It helped silence, if not erase altogether, the participation of many Polish communists in the October Revolution and the short-lived experimentation with "dual power" through worker councils in Poland from historical accounts.[12]

The Cold War mainly recycled this already established interwar anticommunism, further entrenching it into international relations (the interstate system) and dividing the world into antagonistic blocs and spheres of influence. Stephen Smith has neatly summarized the major methods of Cold War anticommunism:

> Throughout the Cold War, the USA and its NATO allies, backed by assorted dictators in Latin America and Asia, largely succeeded in checking the expansion of communism through military, economic, and political means. The West employed a battery of methods to "contain" communism, from conventional warfare, as in Korea, Malaya, or Indochina; to the overthrow of legitimate governments, as in Iran, China, or Nicaragua; to economic and military support for authoritarian regimes (Latin America); to assassinations and clandestine operations linked to right-wing terrorists (Gladio in Italy); and, not least, by relentless escalation of the arms race. More seemly … methods of countering communist expansion include the promotion of intellectual and artistic freedom and, from the 1970s, the advocacy of human rights. (2014, 18–19)

[12] For instance, Karl Radek, who in 1917 became Leon Trotsky's deputy, the Vice-Commissar for Foreign Affairs, was largely erased from national historiography (Wójcik 2019, 57).

This history of anticommunism is also the history of the Eastern Bloc, where communism had become increasingly nationalized and absorbed into the state, especially with Stalinism. For the oppositional groups that emerged in the Eastern Bloc, for instance, in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, the communism that was supposedly embodied by the party-state seemed utterly alien and imposed from above and abroad (Moscow).

Communism, as a Russian moral sickness, was no longer supposed to be located outside the nation; it was now the state that threatened to infiltrate and "corrupt" the social relations from within. It supposedly "penetrated" the entire social fabric through state apparatuses, most notoriously, the secret service. Together with right-wing anticommunists, liberal and neoliberal groups identified communism altogether with total surveillance, control, and repression. The "totalitarianism" paradigm, first conceived during the interwar and then invoked by some left critics of Soviet state communism, has become central to hegemonic anticommunist discourse, including its post-Cold War iteration.

Anticommunism Without Communists

Post-Cold War anticommunism presents a puzzling contradiction. As Enzo Traverso (2007) lucidly put it, how can we explain the recent wave of anticommunism that emerged after the end of the Cold War across the world, a "'militant,' fighting anticommunism, which is all the more paradoxical inasmuch as its enemy had ceased to exist?" We may further ask: might this "anticommunism without communists" express a similar logic or phantasmatic operation as "class struggle without class" or "antisemitism without Jews," which both consist of a complex play of projections and displacements?

This post-Cold War anticommunism can be observed in different locations, from Jair Bolsonaro's Brazil, Narendra Modi's India, and Tayyip Erdoğan's Turkey to Donald Trump's USA. Yet post-1989 Eastern Europe offers particularly suggestive insights into this phenomenon. It shows how post-Cold War anticommunism functions as an *ideology of primitive accumulation* in the periphery of neoliberal Europe. It is the name of a bundle of ideas, attitudes, and fantasies that serve to silence and disable a structural critique of capitalism and its violence. As such, this anticommunism is mainly articulated through a distinct politics of history and memory and a prolific discourse of exclusion and security,

which bring together mechanisms ranging from antisemitism, xenophobia, and homophobia to the marginalization of subaltern classes and the repression and ban of political "dangers" or "extremists." These elements of anticommunism are closely intertwined and work at multiple scales. For analytical purposes, however, I discuss them separately.

As mentioned before, the anticommunist politics of history and memory mainly treats communism as a criminal system, symbolized by "totalitarian" repression and terror. It typically equates communism with fascism or Nazism in its "illiberal" outlook and exercise of violence. Francois Furet's *The Passing of an Illusion* and Stephen Courtois' *The Black Book of Communism* are well-known products of this tendency. Here, the totalitarianism paradigm is employed to paint a moralized image of communism that recycles Cold War stereotypes and stigmatizes any radical political vision of transformation as leading toward a horrendous "totalitarianism" (Žižek 2001). While focusing on the history of "big men" (political leaders such as Lenin, Stalin, and Mao) and the allegedly omnipotent power of the state, the totalitarian paradigm tends to downplay the agency of the ordinary people in the communist period. The latter are typically portrayed as atomized subjects, pitiful victims or survivors, compromised "collaborators," or heroic oppositionists.

This type of anticommunism is particularly widespread among both liberal and conservative nationalists in Poland, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe (Traykov 2019; Gagyi 2016; Poenaru 2013), although it is also a global phenomenon. For instance, the European Union has played no little part in the spread and institutionalization of this discourse of anticommunism across Europe. Whether in the form of "memory laws" that treat communism as a quasi-criminal and morally abusive regime or in the form of guidelines given to the former communist states that instruct them in how to dismantle their "totalitarian heritage" (e.g., "lustration" laws), European institutions have actively contributed to the establishment of anticommunist hegemony (Tsoneva 2019).[13]

[13] This anticommunism in international politics could be easily mobilized to justify violent democracy crusades by offering a sense of moral superiority. For instance, the influential Polish ex-dissident Adam Michnik expressed his support for the military intervention against Saddam Hussein's Iraq with these words: "I remember my nation's experience with totalitarian dictatorship. This is why I was able to draw the right conclusions from Sept. 11, 2001 .... Just as the great Moscow trials showed the world the essence of Stalinist system; just as 'Kristallnacht' exposed the hidden truth of Hitler's Nazism, watching the collapsing World Trade Center towers made me realize that the world was facing

When we consider anticommunism in the context of neoliberalization, and particularly with regard to how it plays into the making of the state and class relations in Eastern Europe, the material politics of anticommunism becomes more acute. Anticommunism is particularly pervasive in the nationalist cosmology of postsocialist "transition." It links the "secrets" of primitive accumulation with the "invisible hand" of ex-communists by invoking the devilish, mercurial figure of the secret communist agent (spy, informer) to account for the reproduction of inequality and privilege in the postsocialist era, as I have discussed in detail elsewhere (Gökarıksel 2019).

In this sense, the discursive practice of anticommunism may be likened to that of antisemitism, as described by Moishe Postone in his study of National Socialism in Germany (1986). Instead of invoking some transhistorical racial or religious enmity, Postone relates modern antisemitism to the emergence of industrial capitalism that caused massive social dislocations ("explosive urbanization, the decline of traditional social classes and strata, the emergence of a large, increasingly organized industrial proletariat") (ibid., 4). Relying on the commodity form in organizing social relations, capitalism operates through a play of abstractions central to the production of value, through which capital turns labor into a commodity to be bought and sold, subordinated to its logic of accumulation. Modern antisemitism, suggests Postone, corresponds to the "personalization" of the abstract operation of capital and its contradictions and destructive tendencies (ibid., 3–4). It is a lethal attempt to embody capital's exploitation, its alienating effects on social relations, and its virtually unbounded international flows by invoking the "international conspiracies" of the Jews and insisting on the Jewish people's disloyalty or non-belonging to the nation. In this sense, antisemitism refers to a certain "biologization" of capital in the figure of the Jew, which is imagined to unleash secretive, intangible, mobile, treacherous, evil forces, as in the case of National Socialism in Germany (ibid., 5–8).[14]

a new totalitarian challenge. Violence, fanaticism, and lies were challenging democratic values" (cited in Traverso 2019, 177).

[14] Moishe Postone writes, "The Jews were not seen merely as representatives of capital (in which case antisemitic attacks would have been much more class-specific). They became the personifications of the intangible, destructive, immensely powerful, and international domination of capital as an alienated social form" (1986, 8). And this antisemitism is characterized by a "hatred of the abstract, a hypostatization of the existing concrete and

While Postone's analysis concerns a specific historical phenomenon and episode, some of the mechanisms he identifies help make sense of the way "anticommunism without communists" operates in the nationalist cosmology of capitalist transformation in Eastern Europe, especially Poland. To be sure, the absence of any comprehensive social reckoning with communist-era state violence in Poland partly anchors this imaginary of the communist agent as a surreptitious, villain, alien figure, responsible for the ills of both the past and the present. Yet, with the utter discrediting of the material reality of state communism, and with the "melting" of communists into thin air through the disowning of their lived communist past, postcommunist anticommunism also has lost its material anchorage, its concrete object. It has turned into an empty signifier that accumulates all sorts of negativities and qualities of non-belonging to the new national space, which is being materially reconstructed by the abstract and uneven accumulation of capital by dispossession. In this context, the figure of the Jewish communist has lost nothing of its historical importance, as it retains its ability to embody the negativities associated with foreignness and corruption, as well as the secretive and spectral enemies from the past that threaten the new capitalism of Poland. Tomasz Żukowski has described well how this anticommunism works:

> A communist has a thousand faces and turns up in the least expected place. He is a ghost from the past and a still dangerous, hidden enemy; a foreign occupier and a frustrated, familiar "homo sovieticus," not pleased with free Poland. He feels great in the new reality, makes "connections" and drums up corruption in the highest circles of business and politics, and – at the same time – organizes demanding strikes and does not give a damn about market reforms. On the one hand, he sucks blood from the Polish people as the enfranchised nomenklatura, and on the other – damages the economy with preposterous, extreme leftist ideas. … He is an antisemite from March '68, but also an anti-Polish Jew. … His only useful characteristic – he is permanently foreign. (emphases original, cited in Golinczak 2019, 108)

Moreover, this postcommunist anticommunism consists of new locations and figures. Nationalists have come to denounce Brussels as "New Moscow"—the symbol of foreign, corruptive, and antinational forces, just as "leftists" (Lewacki) came to refer to all sorts of "anti-Polish" people:

by a single-minded ruthless – but not necessarily hate-filled – mission: to rid the world of the source of all evil" (9).

cyclists, vegetarians, environmentalists, feminists, gays, and lesbians—in short, everyone who does not fit the description of the "traditional" Pole (Drozda 2015). Overall, "the communist" has become such an elusive, yet politically useful term that almost every group in postsocialist Poland calls its opponent communist. While right-wing nationalists call "liberals," "atheists," and "feminists" communists in disguise (Graff et al. 2019),[15] liberal and neoliberal groups call right-wing groups little more than right-wing "Bolsheviks."[16] Indeed, anticommunism has been the cornerstone of liberal rhetoric no less than it is for right-wing nationalists—and leftist groups were also not exempt from anticommunism (Moll 2019). For liberals, anticommunism has been a very useful tool to demonize the social discontent about the reproduction of class inequality through uneven accumulation. The disgruntled popular classes (the dispossessed and the disenfranchised) are identified as *homo sovieticus*, who are "civilizationally incompetent" and who have "failed" to make it to the new era of freedom and democracy. They are supposed to be "captives" of the past, their habits, and mentalities indelibly marked by communism (Buchowski 2006).

I want to emphasize that this post-Cold War anticommunism is not simply a Polish or Eastern European phenomenon. International organizations, especially the European Union, have been complicit with it from

[15] For instance, the conservative Polish priest Dariusz Oko recently said, "genderism is a mutation of communism." "The same people (or their physical or spiritual children) who proclaimed the praises of Stalinism and its communist crimes are now preaching genderism and applying similar methods." See: https:// www. churchmilitant. com/ news/ article/ polish- priest- those- who- pushed- communism- now- push- gender- ideology? fbclid= IwAR2uu1ttrtoZBwYykS3fNkTp0SM9nlUmCsidYPS- 7rp13slgLahg_ 2cketw (last accessed 24 August 2019).

[16] Donald Tusk, the neoliberal Polish politician and the last president of the European Council gave the following speech in Warsaw in 2018 that brings together the different forms of anticommunism: "[The Polish Marshal] Józef Pilsudski, when he defeated the Bolsheviks [in the Polish-Soviet war, 1919–1921] in which Poland withstood the Red Army's march to the West and when he de facto defended Western community, the community of freedom – he not only defended the independence of our homeland against the barbarians of the East – then his situation was slightly worse than ours. When Lech Walesa defeated the Bolsheviks in some symbolic sense [as the head of the Solidarity labor movement that shook up the party-state], then his situation was much harsher than ours. So, if they could defeat the Bolsheviks, then why could you not defeat the modern Bolsheviks" (cited in Moll 2019, 119)?

its very beginning. In the next and final section, I focus on the way liberalism through the "militant democracy" doctrine has built on anticommunism, which it has entrenched into the European constitutionalism and legal-institutional arrangements and which has important consequences for current social struggles.

Anticommunist Lineages of "Militant Democracy"

At first glance, the anticommunism of "militant democracy" does not seem comparable to that of radical nationalists or far-right groups, which is more explicit and openly aggressive. Yet, the October Revolution and the "communist threat" associated with it have been no less integral to militant democracy than interwar fascism, to which militant democracy is often considered to respond. Militant democracy, informed by an anticommunist vision, has been central to the history of modern European constitutionalism, at both national and regional levels (Müller 2012; Wilkinson 2019). It occupies an important place in the liberal politics of security, which has been subject to rigorous critical analysis, especially through critical studies of post-9/11 Euro-America. That analysis has helped bring to light the authoritarian forms of power embedded in liberalism, especially the ways in which sovereign power is exercised through liberal security politics, often dressed in the language of exception or emergency.[17]

It was Karl Loewenstein who first coined the term "militant democracy" in 1937 to underscore the need for a "militant" defense of liberal democracy against fascism. Loewenstein and other legal scholars after him took the Weimar Republic as the paradigmatic case that manifested the "weakness" of liberal democracy in defending itself against "extreme" groups, which came to power through democratic elections. These remarks, as is often the case with the liberal reflections on Nazi Germany, tended to downplay or neglect the authoritarian forms of rule exercised by the Weimar Republic, which Walter Benjamin (2007) and Ernst Fraenkel (2017), for instance, perceptively highlighted.

[17] See, for instance, Accetti and Zuckerman (2017) for a useful discussion of the way militant democracy may be thought with Carl Schmitt's reflections on sovereignty and the state of exception. For a more general discussion of liberalism's historical involvement in authoritarian, colonial, and imperial forms of power, see Losurdo (2005) and Mehta (1999).

Militant democracy doctrine authorizes the legal employment of exclusionary and purificatory measures including bans, purges, and expulsions of "dangerous" groups from the political community in the name of "defending" liberal democracy. As such, militant democracy poses the oft-noted "paradox of democracy," in which democracy undermines itself by employing antidemocratic measures as self-defense (Capoccia 2013). More specifically, militant democracy has been impregnated with the following conceptual and practical problems: Under what conditions should the authoritarian measures of militant democracy be applied? To whom? By whom? When and for how long?

Today these questions remain largely unsettled and have assumed renewed urgency. Considering that the target of militant democracy has arguably become more ambiguous and fluid in the post-Cold War era (as it has focused on "terrorism" and Islam), the security mechanism underlying militant democracy has become more expansive and perilous (Accetti and Zuckerman 2017). In the interwar era, the main target of militant democracy was the fascist groups, which openly challenged the liberal-democratic system of rule. The postwar European constitutional imagination and liberal capitalist state-building project identified the "communist threat" as their main enemy. In line with the Cold War anticommunism that I discussed earlier, these European states and the political and economic associations they established, which later gave way to the European Union, not only constructed communism as an alien, antidemocratic, and totalitarian force, but also saw labor struggles at home (in Western Europe) as the product of deceptive Soviet agents and employed repressive methods and implemented welfare policies to deradicalize and "manage" the class struggle. Such anticommunism, rooted in the fear of communist takeover, became intensified into a deep suspicion of popular movements and gradually became institutionalized into a number of popularly unaccountable agencies, such as the constitutional courts and technocratic organizations like the European commissions and central bank. In the same vein, militant democracy was mainly left to the courts, which were held responsible for deciding on and applying its authoritarian measures. This "militancy," even though it seemed aloof from socioeconomic matters, enabled the deployment of political authoritarianism to secure and entrench the liberal and, later, neoliberal socioeconomic arrangements and constituted the crux of the "authoritarian liberalism" that was

internal to capital's offensive against labor (see also Wilkinson's chapter in this volume).[18]

In this respect, Eastern Europe, envisaged as the major geographical site of the communist threat, has been an important reference point. In the post-Cold War era, too, it has continued to play a key role in the establishment of the European constitutional order. No longer a site of the communist threat, it was now described in the West as the ultimate manifestation of the triumph of liberal democracy and capital over communism. It was supposed to herald a new era of constitutionalism and human rights.[19]

Yet anticommunism did not simply disappear, but rather continued to function in Eastern Europe as part of the European integration process and the so-called "return to Europe" vision of the liberal ruling classes in Eastern Europe. In the 1990s and 2000s, anticommunism became further entrenched, with the new wave of constitution-making and human rights legislation and institutions, which were inspired from Western Europe and, later, the European Union and bore the stamp of militant democracy. The ethos of militant democracy was made manifest in the adoption of the European treaties and guidelines to restructure the state and law (e.g., the European Convention on Human Rights and the European courts) and to conduct de-communization or lustration policies that involve the banning and purging of ex-communists and former secret communist agents. Militant democracy was also manifest in the "vigilant role" ascribed to the constitutional court, the judicial activism that aimed to protect "democratization" and "neoliberalization" against dangers, including labor protests and popular movements that it called "irrational" or "populist."

This ethos of militant democracy is not just embodied by the legal and political institutions of the postsocialist state, however; it has been also invoked by social groups, as in Poland and Hungary, against what they see as "democratic backsliding" (Grudzinska-Gross 2014). To counter

[18] In this paper, I do not focus on "authoritarian neoliberalism," which is closely related to my discussion of "authoritarian liberalism," but which deserves a much fuller treatment in its own right. See, e.g., Adam Fabry (2019) for a discussion of Viktor Orbán's regime as a variant of "neoliberal authoritarianism."

[19] Eastern Europe, especially the democratic struggles in socialist Poland, continues to inspire new theoretical reflections about a "more tolerant" and "self-limiting" militant democracy. See, e.g., Kirschner (2014).

the ongoing right-wing authoritarian offensive that aims to dismantle and reorganize the liberal constitutional framework, they aspire to "defend" the existing democracy by embracing the idea of Europe and calling for a punitive response from the European Union. For instance, a civic initiative called the "Committee for the Defense of Democracy" (Komitet Obrony Demokracji, henceforth KOD) was recently established in Poland, alluding to the famous "Workers' Defense Committee" that was founded in 1976–1977 by a group of dissident intellectuals to establish solidarity relations with the repressed workers. It is indicative that KOD activists substituted "workers" with "democracy," a term largely associated with the existing liberal constitutional system following Euro-American norms. Thus, the major fronts of the "Defense of Democracy" focused on the right-wing offensive against judicial institutions, a legalistic conception that sidelined the reproduction of social-material inequalities, precaritization, and disenfranchisement that lay at the heart of postsocialist neoliberalization and have hollowed out actually existing democracy. This "Defense of Democracy" has accordingly become locked in the contest between the well-entrenched political camps of secular, pro-European liberals and conservative "Euroskeptic" ethnonationalists. In this contestation, the liberal groups have largely succumbed to the usual demonization of their right-wing opponents as "culturally backward," "irrational," and "vengeful populists," echoing the language of the manifesto that I mentioned at the beginning of the paper. Thus framed, their "defense of democracy" mobilization has not only lost momentum, but it has also left intact the existing postsocialist neoliberal order and social hierarchies that give way to right-wing nationalist movements. Thereby, the postsocialist hegemony of anticommunism, which envelops liberal, neoliberal, and conservative nationalist groups, has lived on and even been perpetuated, to the detriment of any democratic politics worthy of the name.

* * *

This experience of "democracy defense" brings to the fore some of the central problems of militant democracy discourse and, more generally, the political deadlock generated by post-Cold War anticommunism. The historical lineage of anticommunism that I have briefly charted in this paper is not meant to be exhaustive, but instead highlights the major forms of anticommunism shared by both liberalism and right-wing authoritarianism. Distancing itself from the easy analogies drawn by liberal groups between today's right-wing populism and the fascism of the interwar era, my paper instead has argued for liberalism's historical

complicity in the articulation of an anticommunism directed broadly at forms of mobilization from below and entrenched in legal-institutional or constitutional frameworks. This anticommunism operates as part of liberalism's expansive security discourse, which disables critical engagement with the (neo)liberal legal and political economic system's contribution to the problems that fuel the popular force of right-wing authoritarian groups. This phenomenon is particularly vivid in postsocialist Eastern Europe, especially in Poland and Hungary, which the liberal and neoliberal pundits had once pointed to as successful examples of capitalist democratization.

More generally, I have suggested that one major way to understand the current right-wing authoritarian formation is to focus on the historical forms of anticommunism and their combination or articulation in particular time-spaces, including, but not limited to, interwar Europe. Anticommunism is a dynamic social-historical formation dialectically related to communism and its historical experience. Analyzing different forms of anticommunism is important, not just for understanding some of the central elements of neoliberal, liberal, and right-wing formations of power, but also for reckoning with the political limitations anticommunism imposes on our political imagination and praxis. Before jumping on the train of the defense of liberal democracy against the ongoing right-wing offensive, any egalitarian-liberatory democratic struggle needs to acknowledge, and critically engage with, the explicit or implicit existence of anticommunism. It is to this strategic question that this paper hopes to contribute.

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PART III

People in Movement: Practices, Subjects, and Narratives of Political Mobilization



Fig. 12.1 A protestor responds to image of Jair Bolsanaro



CHAPTER 12

Global Crises and Popular Protests: Protest Waves of the 1930s and 2010s in the Global South

Chungse Jung

This chapter assesses the scope and characteristics of the protest wave of the early 2010s in the global South through comparison with the protest wave of the 1930s. In the past decade, we can observe protest waves that have swept the world: the Arab Spring; anti-austerity riots in England, Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Italy; the Chilean Autumn; the Occupy movements; antiauthoritarian mobilizations in Russia, Ukraine, Romania, and Turkey; social and political unrest in Brazil and Venezuela; the student protest #YoSoy132 in Mexico; the 15 M-indignados movements in Spain; the Sunflower Student Movement in Taiwan; the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong; and South Korea's mobilizations for democracy. As of now, we have almost enough hindsight on the last ten years to compare this wave to revolutionary moments from the 1980s, the 1960s, and even from earlier decades. The revolutionary upsurge of the 1930s is of particular interest as the early 2010s revolutionary wave demonstrates

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_12

many similarities to, and overlaps with, the 1930s and is thus indicative of a new pattern of revolution in world history (Fig. 12.1).

Such cyclical worldwide outbreaks and resurgences of popular protest suggest that a common set of social processes link social movements across national contexts and international borders. From theoretical and empirical work on social movements in the world-historical perspective,[1] we find that protests located in different countries and regions are linked, in both incidence and intensity, through several global historical structures: world-scale structures of governance; global political processes; the hierarchy and networks of the world-economy; and cycles of global economic hegemony and rivalry. However, due to methodological and perceptual limitations, only a small number of studies have analyzed worldwide patterns and processes behind protest waves (for notable works, see Martin 2008; Silver 2003).

This chapter offers an account of the world-historical patterns for two protest waves in the global South: the 1930s and the early 2010s. In the process of analyzing these two protest waves, several questions emerged: (1) where to locate these protests in the changing trajectory of geopolitics and the world-economy; (2) how much the protests can be defined by a shared similarity of theme in their struggles; and (3) how such an analysis can contribute to understanding protest waves in the global South. Based on empirical findings, I will examine in particular a key premise of world-systems studies. The *semiperiphery* is a key spatial region for initiating transformative actions and protest waves against the dominant hegemonic structure of the capitalist world-economy (see Boswell and Chase-Dunn 2006; Chase-Dunn 1989, 1990).[2] Based on my research findings, I argue that while this was true of the protest wave of the 1930s,

[1] For the principal works outlining this perspective, see Amin et al. (1990), Arrighi and Silver (1999), Arrighi et al. (1989), Chase-Dunn (1990), McMichael (1990), Martin (2005, 2008), Santiago-Valles (2005), Silver (2003), West et al. (2009).

[2] The identification of three broad zones in the world-economy—*core, semiperiphery*, and *periphery*—is a key contribution of world-systems analysis to understanding the characteristics of the capitalist world-economy. Within the axial division of labor, the core and the periphery are involved in an unequal exchange of high-wage products (e.g., manufactured goods) and low-wage products (e.g., raw materials). The semiperiphery stands in between

that of the 2010s was in fact concentrated in the global South. Furthermore, I assert that popular protests in the global South are characterized by one of two themes, each of which contests dominant hegemonic constraints and contributes to the protests' successive growth and expansion: the *struggle against exclusion* and the *struggle against exploitation*.

Data and Method

To map out the world-historical patterns that structured the two protest waves, I have used *The New York Times* from 1870 to 2015 as my historical source. *The New York Times* has been widely acknowledged as one of the best single newspaper sources for social movement event data, as it has reported more events and provided more detail than any other singular newspaper source.[3] Located in a hegemonic country, the United States, this source has had a significant interest in covering disputed areas of the global South in the era of US hegemony. Using the newspaper database, *ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times*, I identified protest events by searching the following keywords from article titles (headlines): *protest*, *rally*, *revolt*, *rebel, riot, demonstration, uprising, unrest*, and *strike*. I selected for forty-three countries/regions located in the global South with the highest number of protest events because of data reliability.[4] I hand-coded a total of 20,000 protest events into a database.[5] Thus, the

in terms of its wage levels and the products it trades in both directions (Wallerstein 1974, 349; 1985).

[3] For this discussion, see Althaus et al. (2001), Earl et al. 2004), Maney and Oliver (2001), Minkoff (1997).

[4] Countries: Africa (Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Sudan); Asia (China, India, Indonesia, South Korea, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong); Europe (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Ukraine); Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Venezuela); Middle East and North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, Libya).

[5] From the database, I have derived yearly counts of protest events as well as more detailed time-series data that include: date; location (country/region and city/town);

database provides a unique source for data on major revolutions, rebellions, revolts, civil strife, insurrections, insurgencies, uprisings, and turmoil (riots, demonstrations, protests, etc.) in the global South.

Protest Waves in the Global South: 1930s and 2010s

Identification of Two Protest Waves: Long 1930s and Short 2010s

One of the most striking empirical findings of protest event patterns from a newly constructed dataset for the long twentieth century is the identification of four great protest waves.[6] Empirical investigations reveal *temporal* and *spatial* popular protest clusters across the global South. These clusters marked key *conjunctures* in long-term capitalist dynamics, global political economy, the relational position of countries within the world-economy, and local level political processes. From the compiled dataset (see Fig. 12.2), I have identified protest waves in the global South clustered in four key epochs, in particular: 1927–1937; 1946–1966; 1979–1990; and 2011–2014. Comparing two of these moments, the 1930s protest wave (1927–1937) had a *longer* duration—eleven years—and saw a *higher* frequency of protest events—an annual average of 307—than the protest waves of the early 2010s (2011–2014), which had a duration of just four years and saw an annual average of 182 events (for a comparison of duration and frequency between the two protest waves, see Table 12.1).

While each protest event has its unique national context, history, and development, there are some common trajectories which should be considered in order to advance empirical understanding of the 1930s and

type of protest; organization/groups; subject/topic/claims; size; violence; primary theme (struggle for exclusion, exploitation, or combined).

[6] Arrighi (1994) argued that the historical phases in the expansion of the capitalist world-economy were defined by particular state formations and modes of capital accumulation, which together attained hegemonic power over the world-economy and were thus capable of fundamentally reshaping it. The process of these movements has led to successive "systemic cycles of accumulation." The long twentieth century, based on US hegemony, is one of these systemic cycles.

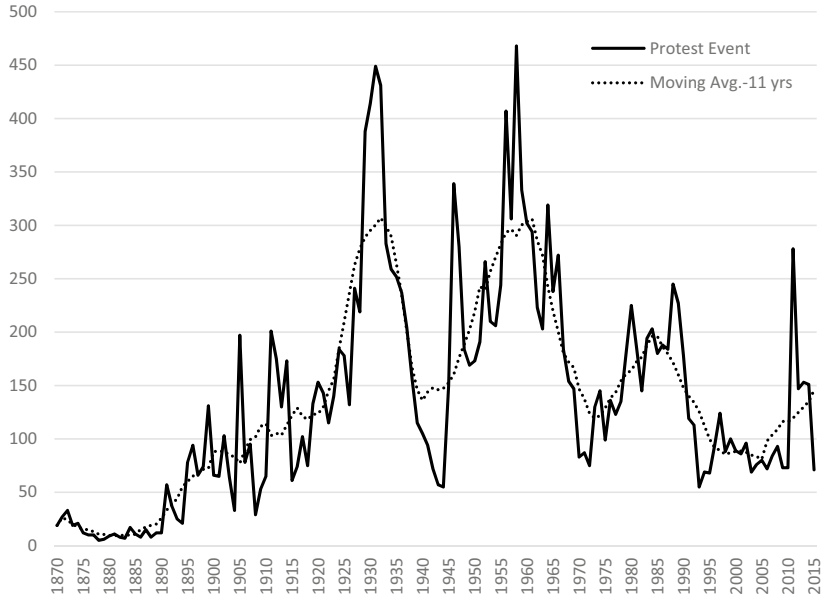


Fig. 12.2 Protest waves in the global South, 1870–2015

Table 12.1 Protest waves of the 1930s and the early 2010s

	1930s	*Early 2010s*
Duration (year)	11 years (1927–1937)	4 years (2011–2014)
Total number of protest events	3377	729
Annual average	307.0	182.3
Peak year (frequency)	1931 (449)	2011 (278)

early 2010s protest waves. The starting point for such considerations is the nature of the world-economy, which is defined by a seamless, deterritorialized process of capitalist globalization. According to Silver and Arrighi (2011, 54), "in both periods, finance capital rose to a dominant position in the global economy relative to capital invested in production. In both periods, moreover, the financialization of economic activities proved destabilizing and culminated in major crises, notably in 1929

and 2008." They also argue that these "financial expansions historically have been periods of *hegemonic transition* ... setting the stage for a new material expansion on a world scale" (Silver and Arrighi 2011, 59; about the process of hegemonic transition, see Arrighi and Silver 2001).

The period of transition from British to US hegemony was a period defined by widespread warfare and repeated economic crises. In the early twentieth century, the expansion of colonialism meant that the rest of the global South had been incorporated into the world-economy. The world-economy of capitalism penetrated all parts of the globe, which is why the Great Depression would represent such a landmark in the history of anti-imperialism and national liberation movements in the global South (Hobsbawm 1995, 204). During the long 1930s, capitalist strategies of relocating certain production processes to peripheral zones led to the rise of nationalism and national liberation struggles for decolonization in Asia and Latin America. The increasing peripheralization of Latin America brought on a massive political mobilization of peasants who had come to be heavily involved in the global market economy and shifted the locus of conflict to the struggle between the masses of the global South and ruling classes within their zones.

Over the period of capitalism in crisis at the end of the long twentieth century, the financialization of global capital has led to growing levels of poverty, inequality, and precarity. In particular, the Great Recession from 2007 to 2009, which saw the implosion of the US financial system, and the subsequent sovereign debt "euro crisis," created conditions in both the global North and the global South in which massive austerity programs displaced workers, raised the cost of living, and spurred the growth of the precariat (Benski et al. 2013, 544). Although the Arab Spring has been portrayed as a primarily political mobilization, as Tejerina et al. (2013, 380) argue, its "antecedent conditions ... are to be found in the increasing levels of social inequality that accompanied global capitalism as it became globalized, financialized, and legitimated by neoliberalism." In sum, the early 2010 global South protest wave, despite its shorter duration, had been reflected by a world-historical dynamics of capitalism—namely the current period of capitalism-in-crisis.

Regional Composition/Diversity

The compiled data shows a significant difference in the regional distribution of protest events and limited regional diversity. The protest events of the long 1930s (1927–1937) emerged across almost all observed countries but were relatively concentrated in two regions: 49% occurred in Latin America and 29% in Asia (see Fig. 12.3). China, Mexico, Cuba, Brazil, India, Poland, Nicaragua, and Argentina were the key countries, with higher levels of popular protest events (see Table 12.2). Empirical observation the 1930s wave representatively includes the following major protest episodes: the Anti-Japanese strikes and riots across China in the late 1920s and the late 1930s; the first phase of Chinese Civil War and Communist insurgency from 1927 to 1937; the Escobar Rebellion and Cristero War in Mexico from 1927 to 1929; the Nicaraguan Sandinistas War from 1928 to 1932; the Polish antisemitic riots from 1928 to 1933;

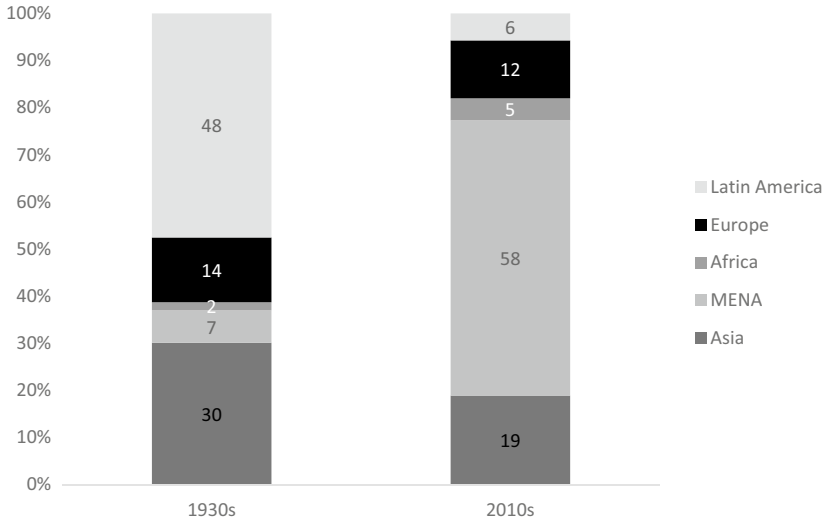


Fig. 12.3 Distribution of protest events by region, the 1930s and the early 2010s

Table 12.2 Top countries for annual average of protest events in protest waves, the 1930s and early 2010s

1927–1937				*2011–2014*			
Country	Rate (%)	Region	Position in the World-Economy	Country	Rate (%)	Region	Position in the World-Economy
China	18.3	Asia	Semiperiphery	Syria	19.8	MENA	Periphery
Mexico	16.7	Latin America	Semiperiphery	Libya	13.2	MENA	Periphery
Cuba	9.3	Latin America	Semiperiphery	Egypt	12.4	MENA	Periphery
Brazil	6.7	Latin America	Semiperiphery	Ukraine	6.5	Europe	Periphery
India	6.1	Asia	Semiperiphery	China	5.5	Asia	Semiperiphery
Poland	5.2	Europe	Semiperiphery	Russia	4.4	Europe	Semiperiphery
Nicaragua	4.9	Latin America	Periphery	Iraq	3.3	MENA	Periphery
Argentina	4.3	Latin America	Semiperiphery	Hong Kong	3.3	Asia	Semiperiphery
Peru	2.5	Latin America	Periphery	Palestine	3	MENA	Periphery
Hungary	2	Europe	Semiperiphery	Turkey	2.5	MENA	Semiperiphery

the Constitutionalist Revolution in Brazil from 1928 to 1935 and the Brazilian Revolution of 1930; the Salt March in India from 1930 to 1931; the Budapest students' anti-Jewish riots in 1930 and anti-Jewish demonstrations in Hungary in 1933; the Sergeants' Revolt and general strikes in Cuba from 1930 to 1935; the Peruvian rebellions from 1931 to 1934 and Revolution of Trujillo in 1932; the Argentine workers' movement from 1932 to 1933; the rebellions and strikes in Mexico from 1935 to 1936; and the 1937 peasant strikes in Poland.

Unlike the protest wave of the 1930s, the early 2010s wave shows a limited regional distribution of protest events: 58% occurred in the Middle East and North Africa (see Fig. 12.3). In particular, a majority of events were concentrated in only a few countries in the Middle East and North Africa such as Syria (20%), Libya (13%), and Egypt (12%) (see Table 12.2). According to the dataset, the 2010s wave encompasses the following major protest episodes: the Sudanese nomadic conflicts from 2010 to 2014; the Egyptian Revolution from 2010 to 2014; the 2011 Tunisian Revolution; the 2011 Libyan Civil War; the nationalist mobilizations in China, including the 2011 Shanghai truckers strikes and the

2012 anti-Japanese demonstrations; the 2011–2013 Russian protests; the Syrian Civil War from 2011 to 2015; the Gezi Park Protest in Turkey in 2013; the 2013–2014 Thai political crisis; the Ukrainian Revolution in 2014; and the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement in 2014.

Comparative studies in social movements have increasingly highlighted the existence of striking similarities between kindred movements in different locations (see della Porta and Rucht 1995). These similarities can be explained by both internal variables and by external factors. It is likelier that diffusion takes place between locations that are closer together geopolitically and culturally, as well as between countries/regions with a history of past interaction (Strang and Meyer 1993, 490). The protest wave of the early 2010s—in particular, the Arab Spring—is a clear example of this idea, as the Arab Spring reflected regional factors.[7]

Position of the World-Economy: From Semiperiphery to Periphery

The structure of the world-economy, defined by a systemwide axial division of labor, contributes to the convergences between popular protests across regions and countries by creating opportunities to form structural affinities across different regions and countries and by facilitating diffusion processes. The two protest waves under discussion were concentrated in different structural positions within the overall world-economy. The protest wave of the 1930s mainly occurred in the semiperiphery (80% of protests reported), while that of the early 2010s was concentrated in the periphery (73% of protests) (see Fig. 12.4). This empirical finding suggests that the semiperiphery's capacity to generate counter-hegemonic activities affecting the overall world-economy may have become obsolescent.

This trend is even more pronounced when we use a more diversified set of categorizations for the world-economy, as suggested by the

[7] Numerous studies have attempted to find and explore the shared and similar factors of the Arab Spring. By drawing on the most notable works, we can identify a few common conditions of the protest waves across the Middle East and North Africa regions as follows: the characteristics of authoritarian regime and lack of democracy; internal political conflicts; the expansion of the middle class and the growing number of highly educated people; a higher rate of unemployed youth/young population; skyrocketing inflation (food prices) and unemployment rate; and the presence of social minorities (race and religion) and conflicts (see Goldstone 2011; Wallerstein 2011; Weyland 2012; Beck 2014; della Porta 2014, 160–196).

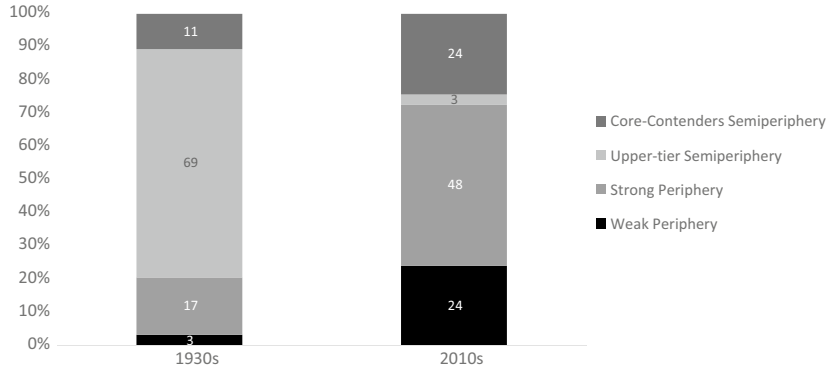


Fig. 12.4 Distribution of protest events by position in the world-economy, the 1930s and the early 2010s

latest research in network analysis (see Mahutga 2014; Mahutga and Smith 2011): *core-contenders*, *upper-tier semiperiphery*, *strong periphery*, and *weak periphery* (for the specific countries/regions in two protest waves, see Table 12.3). In the protest wave of the 1930s, 69% of protest events occurred in the countries/regions from the upper-tier semiperiphery and this rate had decreased to only 3% in the early 2010s protest wave (see Fig. 12.4). On the contrary, in the protest wave of the 1930s, only 3% of the protest events occurred in countries/regions from the weak periphery, while this rate skyrocketed to 24% in the protest wave of the early 2010s, and only 17% of the protest events in the strong periphery had increased to 49% in the early 2010s. Moreover, between the two protest waves, the rate of core-contenders on the entire protest events increased from 11% to 24%. This shows that the divergence of the structure of capitalist world-economy in the global South has been directly reflected in the activities of popular protests.[8] These findings suggest that the mobilizations in the countries/regions of the global periphery have led the protest wave of the early 2010s and the global periphery has increased their counter-hegemonic activities in the period of capitalism-in-crisis. In sum, this finding shows the empirical challenge to the long-lasting notion

[8] About the discussion of four or more multiple clusters of the capitalist world-economy, see Mahutga (2006), Nemeth and Smith (1985), Karataşli (2017).

Table 12.3 Countries/regions in the semiperiphery and periphery of the world-economy, the 1930s and 2010s

		1930s	*2010s*
Semiperiphery	Core-contenders	Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic), Hong Kong, Hungary, Poland, USSR (Russia), Yugoslavia (Serbia)	Argentina, Brazil, China, Czech Republic, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, South Korea, Mexico, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Turkey, Thailand
	Upper-tier semiperiphery	Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Cuba, India, Mexico, Pakistan, Romania, South Africa, Turkey, Ukraine	Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Indonesia, Philippines, Romania, Serbia, Vietnam
Periphery	Strong periphery	Algeria, Colombia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Korea, Lebanon, Morocco, Nicaragua, Peru, Philippines, Syria, Thailand, Tunisia, Venezuela	Algeria, Cuba, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Myanmar, Pakistan, Peru, Sudan, Tunisia, Ukraine, Venezuela
	Weak periphery	DR Congo, Kenya, Libya, Myanmar, Palestine, Sudan Vietnam	DR Congo, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, Palestine, Syria

Note Author's classification based on research by Lloyd et al. (2009), Mahutga and Smith (2011), and Mahutga (2014). For details on the classification process, see Jung (2013)

in world-systems studies that the semiperiphery is a key region for making transformative actions and antisystemic movements.

Struggles Against Exclusion Over Struggles Against Exploitation

Antisystemic movements are categorized around two main ideas: labor-socialist movements and nationalist movements. According to Arrighi et al. (1989, 30–31), "the social movement defined the oppression as that of employers over wage earners, the bourgeois over the proletariat .... The national movement, on the other hand, defined the oppression as that

of one ethno-nationalist group over another." However, the distinction between the two varieties of antisystemic movements has become blurred (Wallerstein 1995, 71). Indeed, as Amin (1990, 116) asserted, most antisystemic movements in the global South have overlapped these two dimensions "in the expression of their revolt" with "a national dimension and a social dimension whose content was more or less radical depending on the circumstances," or could not be organized in these two categories because some societies in the global South had already achieved a full nation-building process or the class contradiction in their social formations was still underdeveloped. Hence, we need to develop a more inclusive concept focusing on the primary themes of movements, *struggles against exploitation* and *struggles against exclusion*, to examine the nature of antisystemic movements such as diverging types of organization, articulated goals and claims, and method of struggles in the global South.

Struggles against exploitation are social movements that challenge the processes of exploitation. The struggles against exploitation in the global South have mobilized people to demand an end to their absolute or relative poverty, austerities, and economic grievances and to resist local economic elites, who would have them participate in the world-historical division of labor for marginal rewards. On the other hand, struggles against exclusion are social movements that contest processes of exclusion from local/domestic/international communities and polities. In particular, two predominant historical processes of exclusion in the global South are "incorporation" and "nation-building" (see Dunaway 2003). These dual processes of incorporation and nation-building have been structured mainly by racism and ethnic discrimination, and this has proved one of the prime causes of national liberation conflicts in the global South. Furthermore, the idea of struggles against exclusion could extend to the issues of displacement and resistance. These struggles encompass political and cultural struggles over sovereignty, limited autonomy, sociopolitical inequality, ecological issues, and minority status and rights in the global South (for a more detailed exploration of this idea, see Jung 2015).

The theme most widely shared by popular protests in both protest waves was the "struggle against exclusion." Between the two protest

waves, the absolute numbers for protest events characterized as struggles against exclusion and struggles against exploitation decreased, from 2595 to 689 and from 784 to 43, respectively. However, struggles against exclusion represented the primary claim in 77% of total protest events from 1927 to 1937 and 94% of total protest events from 2011 to 2014. This finding shows that struggles against exclusion have remained a primary issue of popular protests in the global South at the beginning and end of the long twentieth century.

When analyzed according to their structural position in the world-economy, in the 1930s, 77% of the struggles against exclusion occurred in the global semiperiphery. Geographically, during the 1930s wave, 42% of exclusion demands out of the entire exclusion protests appeared in Latin America and 34% in Asia, while 13% occurred in Europe, 8% in the Middle East and North Africa, and only 2% in Africa. However, when considering the balance between exploitation and exclusion, the countries and regions located in the Middle East and North Africa (e.g., Morocco 100%, Syria 100%, Lebanon 100%, Tunisia 100%, Libya 100%, Egypt 98%, and Turkey 98%) and Africa (e.g., Ethiopia 100%, Democratic Republic of the Congo 100%, and Kenya 100%) showed the relatively higher rate of struggles against exclusion than the European and Latin American countries and regions (e.g., Russia 68%, the Czech Republic 67%, Mexico 66%, Bulgaria 64%, Poland 63%, Argentina 52%, Cuba 50%, and Colombia 32%; for the specific countries/regions, see Fig. 12.5).

In contrast to the 1930s, in the early 2010s, 76% of the struggles against exclusion emerged from a different position in the world-economy, the global periphery. Geographically, protest events related to struggles against exclusion mainly occurred—61%—in the Middle East and North Africa region (otherwise: Asia 17%, Europe 13%, Latin America 5%, and Africa 4%). On the other hand, most of the considerable countries/regions with higher frequencies of protest events showed a high rate of struggles against exclusion (e.g., Syria 100%, Libya 100%, Egypt 98%, Ukraine 100%, Russia 100%, Iraq 100%, Hong Kong 92%, Palestine 95%, and Turkey 100%) except China (68%; for the specific countries/regions, see Fig. 12.6). This means that the intensification of struggles against exclusion of the early 2010s protest wave in the global South results not only from the geographical concentration of popular protests in the Middle East and North Africa but also from the global insurgency after the period of capitalism in crisis.

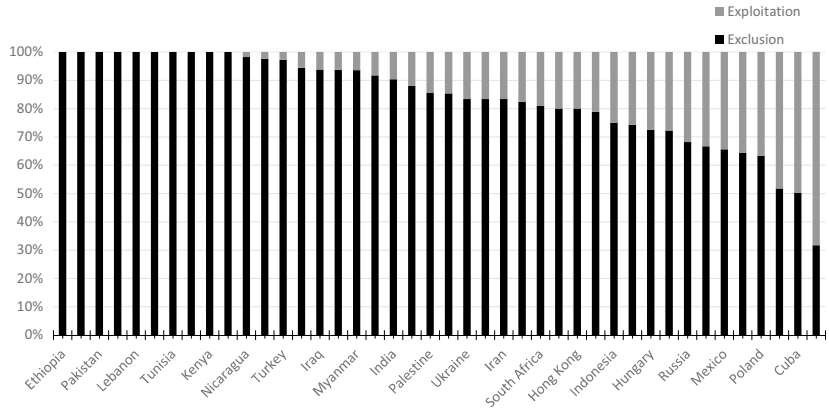


Fig. 12.5 Struggles against exploitation and exclusion by countries/regions, the protest wave of the 1930s (42 countries/regions)

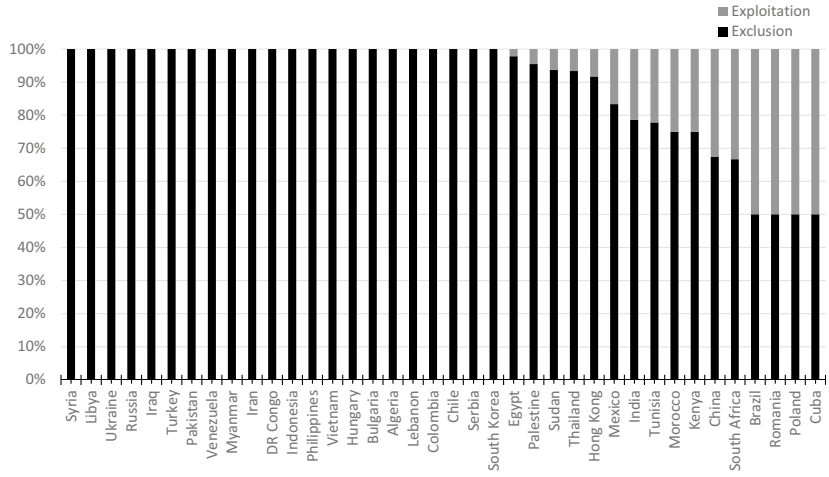


Fig. 12.6 Struggles against exploitation and exclusion by countries/regions, the protest wave of the early 2010s (38 countries/regions)

Conclusion

For the global South, the 1930s and 2010s were two of the most revolutionary periods in the long twentieth century. By mapping out the world-historical pattern of protest events using *The New York Times*, I distinguish several key juxtapositions between the two protest waves. First, the compiled data identified two global protest waves, from 1927 to 1937 and from 2011 to 2014, that had occurred in periods of world hegemonic transition and capitalism in crisis. During the rise of US hegemony and the period of the Great Depression, many protest events happened in the global semiperiphery, while during the decline of US hegemony after the Great Recession, most protest events emerged within the global periphery. This empirical finding could challenge the long-established notion that the semiperiphery constitutes the key region for making transformative actions and protest waves. It also suggests that while popular protests are associated with economic and geopolitical crises, the locus of revolutionary activity in the global South is changing along with the world-historical context. Moreover, the most widely shared theme of popular protests—struggles against exclusion—was consistent in both protest waves across regions in the global South. This finding implies that struggles against exclusion remain a central issue of popular protests in the global South over the long twentieth century.

But a key question remains: did the global South protest wave of the early 2010s have a counter hegemonic capacity, that is, the ability to break down the dominant hegemony of the capitalist world-economy? Crisis in capitalism has grown as a global scale, not only in the global semiperiphery but also in the global periphery. However, counter hegemonic activities have paradoxically dispersed in the global semiperiphery. As the crisis increases and deepens, a centripetal force and convergence of antisystemic movements resisting this crisis have weakened more than ever before in the global semiperiphery. Compared to the 1930s, the early 2010s protest wave was clustered in a relatively limited number of regions and countries. Its frequency was relatively lower and its duration relatively shorter when compared to past protest waves. Finally, unlike the 1930s, which led to systemic transformations to the world capitalist economy—the "revolutionary thirties" as Karl Polanyi put it ([1957] 2001, 21), the recent protest wave seems to have lacked substantive programs and strategies capable of challenging the hegemony of the capitalist world-economy, and the outcome of the protest wave at a world scale remains uncertain.

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Fig. 13.1 The poet Muriel Rukesayer

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CHAPTER 13

Radical Moderns/Poetry International: Communist Poets in the 1930s

Kenan Behzat Sharpe

In his April 1948 poem "Angina Pectoris," Turkish poet Nâzım Hikmet reflects on the past two decades of communist commitment and intermittent imprisonment. He blames his chronic medical condition on the unruly identifications of his internationalist heart. From prison, the poet's heart marches with the Red Army as it crosses the Yangtze River to victory; it is riddled with bullets in Greece alongside the antifascist partisans; it freezes in a ramshackle house in an Istanbul slum. Carrying the poetic conceit to its conclusion, Nâzım declares that the real reason for his damaged arteries is this ability to project his heart outward to the fortunes of unknown comrades all over the world (Fig. 13.1):

> And that, doctor, that is the reason
> for this angina pectoris—
> not nicotine, prison, nor arteriosclerosis.
> I look at the night through the bars
> and despite the weight on my chest
> my heart still beats with the most distant stars. (2002, 136)

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_13

His is not a medical condition but an affective one. Even from the stasis and isolation of prison, Nâzım is so wrapped up in the people and events of the outside world that his heart is worn down with excessive use. The ability to identify with the struggles of strangers and to celebrate or mourn along with them, even the ability to feel into the suprahistorical vast distances of the cosmos—this is the cause of his battered organ. He carries this bad heart in his chest like a badge of honor.

This chapter focuses on a generation of communist poets that spent the long 1930s "changing our country more frequently than our shoes," as Bertolt Brecht once quipped. Nâzım Hikmet (Turkey), Yannis Ritsos (Greece), and Langston Hughes and Muriel Rukeyser (USA) responded to the rise of fascism and global economic crisis with communist internationalism. Whether able to physically cross borders, or else identifying with parallel struggles from the confinement of their prison cells, these radical writers developed aesthetic techniques and poetic modes consonant with the danger and the promise of the 1930s. Madrid, Harlem, Shanghai, Addis Ababa, Rome, Salonica, and Istanbul all appear as subjects and settings in their poetry. The words of these poets were just as mobile as their bodies or hearts. Their writings were rapidly translated into other languages and published through cultural networks supported by the world communist movement. Their poetry addressed not just national or elite audiences but, potentially, all of humanity. Closer to reaching this goal than we might imagine, their poems were put to immediate use, often in ephemeral forms like in pamphlets and broadsides that crisscrossed the globe.

Nâzım, Ritsos, Hughes, and Rukeyser are just a few representatives of a larger grouping that Aijaz Ahmad has named "Poetry International" (2000). The term describes poets "from Latin America, the Arab world, the Caribbean, Europe, Central America and South Asia" who, as Marxists, lived and wrote "as part of a global fabric." They formed a generational cadre that Michael Denning has dubbed "radical moderns" (1998, 39). These committed cultural producers were born in the first few years of the twentieth century; lived through World War I; were politically and artistically radicalized in the 1920s, aligning themselves with the international labor movement and the artistic avant-garde; experienced the global economic crisis and Great Depression; and participated in the Popular Front and antifascist struggles of the 1930s. Denning's use of the term "radical modern" is focused on the USA. However, if we combine these two concepts, then our four poets—with their globe-trotting

biographies and links to other writers—are both *radical moderns* and participants in *Poetry International*.

Other thinkers have also observed that the 1930s created a rare moment of international convergence for art and culture, just as it did for the politics of solidarity. In "Poetry and Communism," Alain Badiou notes the remarkable fact that "last century, some truly great poets, in almost all languages on earth, have been communists" (2014, 93). What were the literary/institutional/personal networks that made this truly international convergence possible? The Soviet Union played an essential role for the work of radical moderns. Katerina Clark reminds us that "around 1935 Soviet cultural leadership was a distinct possibility throughout the transatlantic world" (2011, 27). With Moscow vying with Paris (and Berlin or Mexico City) as a cultural capital of the world, artists and intellectuals across the globe found themselves "enticed by the possibility of a transnational cultural space, an intellectual fraternity of leftists" (31). Marxism was a source of exhilaration for writers—and not only in the transatlantic world. Soviet support for anti-imperialism increased this attraction, bringing in many intellectuals in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, as well as African Americans. The Comintern was "the only European political organization to declare the equality of the races and to officially embrace anti-imperialism" (Kent and Matera 2017, 9). As Robert Young remarks, communist parties were attractive across the three continents precisely because they provided tools for articulating the links between international and national struggles (2001, 169). Culturally, this movement was one of the few ways peripheral writers could gain a worldwide readership.

While voluminous and essential scholarship exists on the work and lives of all these poets individually, little comparative research has been published tracing the common themes, literary forms, and events that appear across the geographically dispersed work of radical moderns.[1] My aim here is to provide an example of the kind of energy that is given off by placing these poets side by side. Using a small sampling of this generation of writers, this chapter builds off an observation of Badiou's—namely that

[1] One great example of this kind of scholarship is Benjamin Balthaser's *Anti-Imperialist Modernism*. Though focused on US-based writers (and not strictly on poets), Balthaser situates them within a global context and traces their physical and metaphorical border-crossings.

"there exists an essential link between poetry and communism" (93).[2] That is, as communists these poets all share:

> A tense, paradoxical, violent love of life in common …. The poetic desire that the things of life would be like the sky and the earth, like the water of the oceans and the brush fires on a summer night—that is to say, would belong by right to the whole world. (93–94)

These politically committed poets are tied together by an emphasis on the rather unexpected theme of love. Love and commitment, poetry and communism: These pairs seem to correspond to that old literary-historical binary of lyric (the genre of love and subjective experience) and epic (a historical, public genre). These two poles are not opposed in Poetry International. One can compose a love poem for masses of strangers, just as one can write about the most private, subjective dimensions of an historical event. Their epistolary poems, for example, effortlessly shuttle between erotic longing addressed to a single individual and political musings that hail a collectivity. This love most often takes the form of internationalism (a love for the common struggles of strangers) and a calling into being of "the people" (shared bonds of love within a national collectivity). Radical moderns use the same poetic-political technique for expressing both internationalist commitment and a focus on one's own "people": identification, or the poetic ability to imagine oneself into the experience of others.

One last note is needed to define the basis of the comparison undertaken here. Many of the poets from this mostly male milieu[3] met face

[2] In this chapter, I have included only poets born 1900–1914 who were already writing explicitly political verse in the 1930s. However, Badiou offers a more generationally broad list of writers including the older César Vallejo and Ai Qing, and younger poets like Mahmoud Darwish (born 1941). Aimé Césaire certainly belongs in this list of radical moderns, as do Pablo Neruda, Bertolt Brecht, Louis Aragon, Nicolás Guillén, and Paul Éluard. Other figures are more ambiguous. Was Mayakovsky born too early to be considered part of Poetry International? Did Faiz Ahmad Faiz begin writing political verse too long after the 1930s? For the sake of brevity, I bracket these questions here.

[3] Muriel Rukeyser is the only prominent radical modern poet who was a woman. There were others in different genres: Nancy Cunard (writer and activist, England), Anna Seghers (novelist, Germany), Frida Kahlo (artist, Mexico), and Martha Gellhorn (novelist and journalist, USA). Though women were sometimes able to move in the "transnational cultural space, an intellectual fraternity of leftists" (Clark 31) coordinated by the Soviet Union and global left-wing movements, the non-canonical status of other radical poets shows that there were definite exclusions at play. The radical legacies of poets like Juana

to face (Nâzım and Ritsos, for example), often becoming close friends. They sometimes fought for the same causes (Hughes and Rukeyser for the Scottsboro Nine; Nâzım Hikmet and Hughes against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia), and all supported the Republicans in Spain (Rukeyser visited Spain; Hughes came to Spain on Pablo Neruda's urging; both Rukeyser and Hughes contributed to an anthology of Spanish Civil War poetry). Some translated each other's work (Ritsos published Greek versions of Nâzım's poetry). Some dedicated poems to each other (Ritsos for Nâzım, Rukeyser for Neruda). Mutual influence and direct contact partially explain their thematic and formal similarities, but most significant is how these poets share a common historical situation as the ground of their common aesthetic and thematic preoccupations.

After Langston Hughes visited Spain in 1937, he reflected on the experience of being a writer living through the history of the 1930s:

> No matter what his country or what his language, a writer, to be a good writer, cannot remain unaware of Spain and China, of India and Africa, of Rome and Berlin. Not only do the near places and the far places influence, even without his knowledge, the very subjects and material of his books, but they affect their physical life as well … (2002, 199)

World events and a Marxist-ish orientation toward them—these cannot but have consequences for the poet's work. It is not surprising therefore that the members of the Poetry International wrote on similar topics in poems appearing in the same venues. What is remarkable, rather, is that these poets utilized the same forms and exhibited parallel attitudes even before they were aware of each other's poetry.

It was the Popular Front that set the historical groundwork for these common aesthetic approaches and attitudes. The policy of the People's Front Against Fascism and War, formalized by the Comintern in 1935 and technically abandoned in 1947, made new political alliances possible. First developed to counter the threat of Nazi Germany, the Popular Front became a wider strategy of "capitalist-communist alliance against fascism" (Hobsbawm 1996, 7.) The Popular Front also gave rise to new artistic genres, attitudes, and modes of identification—in short, a whole structure

de Ibarbourou (Uruguay) or Concha Urquiza (Mexico)—whose sexualities, bohemianism, or interest in religion pushed them out of the mainstream of the global left of the 1930s—need to be further researched.

of feeling. It led to a search for what united people across (and within) linguistic, cultural, religious, national, and factional borders.

In describing a "Popular Front structure of feeling" I am drawing on Raymond Williams, who developed the concept to describe the "particular quality of social experience and relationship, historically distinct from other particular qualities, which gives the sense of a generation or of a period" (1977, 131). Structure of feeling describes the style an era. A feeling is in the air, so to speak, but it must be tracked through its various concrete expressions, often appearing in far-flung places. A structure of feeling is "a structure in the sense that you could perceive it operating in one work after another which weren't otherwise connected—people weren't learning it from each other; yet it was one of feeling much more than thought—a pattern of impulses, restraints, tones" (1981, 159). The concept is particularly apt for cultural periodization because it links political developments and economic modes with styles, aesthetic trends, affects, and psychic experience. Looking at how geographically distant poets produced similar work in the same period provides a helpful laboratory case for tracking the 1930s structure of feeling. The omnivorous, ecumenical, promiscuous, combinatory sensibility of the Popular Front can be best glimpsed in the poetry of the period. Lyric poets, if we follow Badiou, are inclined to search for what is common across difference. In this way, radical moderns were well suited to internalize and subjectivize the Popular Front.

After reanimating the 1930s style through brief readings of our poets, this chapter will address the relevance of Poetry International today. Many sense in the air of our own historical present a similar feeling of danger (with the rise of nativist, right-wing authoritarianism and a new crisis for liberal democracy) and promise (the reentry of socialism into popular discourse, the growth of left-wing art and culture) as the 1930s. While the writings of Poetry International can provide affective and aesthetic resources to readers today—and poems by radical moderns do reappear at certain key moments[4]—aspects of Popular Front culture inevitably come across as dated and even cloying under contemporary conditions of what Lauren Berlant describes as twenty-first-century "post-Fordist

[4] See, for example: Young. Andy. "Before the Inevitable Ending: Time, Nâzım Hikmet, and the Sweet Potato Boy of Tahrir Square." *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 29 September 2013, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/so-and-so-time-nazim-hikmet-and-the-sweet-potato-boy-of-tahrir-square/.

affect": the human "sensorium making its way through a postindustrial present, the shrinkage of the welfare state, the expansion of grey (semi-formal economies) and the escalation of transnational migration, with its attendant rise in racism and political cynicism" (2011, 19). As inchoate as today's structure of feeling might be, one thing is certain: our own cultural dominant is highly allergic to sentimentality and over-earnestness. If love or populism no longer feel as readily accessible to us, what affective modes can a contemporary communist art draw upon? We cannot simply apply strategies or approaches from the 1930s to our own moment. However, exploring that incredible moment of convergence might help us better delineate what our own present is, and from there what our future might be.

Internationalism and Love

In 1948, the same year Nâzım wrote "Angina Pectoris" but unknown to him, Yannis Ritsos was composing a similar poem. Not far across the Aegean Sea, in a concentration camp for political prisoners on the Greek island of Lemnos, the hearts of Ritsos and his fellow inmates were aflutter with the good news coming in from China:

> Last night the newspapers arrived.
> The most recent dated November 4
> …
> The news from China
> about Mukden, the Yangtze, Peking—these names
> we loved them so dearly last night. (2013, 19)

The language of politics mingles with the language of love as these prisoners track the precise movements of the Red Army from their own position of immobility:

> Tonight we learned that we have to be happy
> in order to love one another.

The Greek antifascist partisans may have been defeated in the Civil War (1946–1949), but if the comrades across the world can capture Beijing, then all is not lost. Ritsos calls this act of imaginative substitution "lov[ing] each other." The radical moderns who articulated this poetic

practice of identification through love continued elaborating it after the war. Yet the 1930s was the high point of this global turn in how politics and aesthetics were imagined.

The catalog or list was a central technique for the expression of bonds of solidarity in Poetry International. Langston Hughes begins one of his first explicitly communist poems, "Merry Christmas" (1930) with a catalog of world locations and events. He starts with China, still early on in its civil war:

> Merry Christmas, China,
> From the gun-boats in the river,
> Ten-inch shells for Christmas gifts,
> And peace on earth forever. (1995, 132)

Hughes goes on to list India ("Gandhi in his cell"), England ("righteous …Christian"), Africa ("From Cairo to the Cape! … For murder and for rape"), as well as the USA ("Yankee domination"). The oppressed and colonized of the world are called into collectivity through their shared naming, creating what Michael Thurston calls a "roll call" of identifications (2001, 91). Such lists not only name alliances, they are calculated to stir a certain awe in the reader regarding the breadth of this love and the length of its connections: Hughes discovers friends and enemies "[i]n the docks at Sierra Leone,/In the cotton fields of Alabama, … /And the cities of Morocco and Tripoli" (165). These list-poems suggest that to not only imagine but physically feel the pain and joy of others is the psychic complement of revolution. These lists bring intersectional alliances into being: "the Red Armies of the International Proletariat/Their faces black, white, olive, yellow, brown" (166). To love is to know that others will call your name just as you call theirs.

In the poetry of radical moderns, specific place names become signifiers for events with global implications. The most charged proper noun in the litany of the turbulent 1930s was "Spain." For many on the Left, the Spanish Civil War was the defining struggle of the age. Spain was the object of numerous poetic tributes. Nâzım's contribution to this microgenre of the Spain-poem is "It Is Snowing in the Night" (1937). The description of an unknown sentry protecting Spain's Republican-held capital pinpoints how love functions for Poetry International:

It is snowing in the night,
You are at the door of Madrid.
In front of you an army
killing the most beautiful things we own,
hope, yearning, freedom and children,
The City ….

It is snowing
And perhaps tonight
your wet feet are cold. (Badiou 2014, 104)

The speaker addresses the unknown sentry with great tenderness. He loves him and regrets his geographical distance:

I know,
…
everything great and beautiful man has still to create
that is, everything my nostalgic soul hopes for
Smiles in the eyes
of the sentry at the door of Madrid.
And tomorrow, like yesterday, like tonight
I can do nothing else but love him.

Here the discourse of politics folds into the language of love. This is partly a function of genre. Lyric poetry, and the wider Romantic mode in the arts, has at its ideological core the claim to imagine and portray the experience of others, to form identifications across distance. Nâzım practices an extravagance of identification. The ability to envision what is common is the psychic corollary of the broad coalition. For radical modern poets, the Popular Front was not just a political strategy for defeating fascism; it had a corresponding aesthetic practice and even affective disposition. Referring to the massive global outpouring of solidarity with the Spanish Republican cause, Hobsbawm notes that "intellectuals and those concerned with the arts were particularly open to [the Popular Front's] appeal" (149). The brutal murder of even a non-militant poet like Lorca confirmed the suspicion of many artists in the 1930s that fascism and art were mortal enemies.

Muriel Rukeyser also saw a connection among art, love, and revolution in Spain. In "Letter to the Front" (1944) she recalls her experience

in 1936, "Coming to Spain on the first day of the fighting/Flame in the mountains, and the exotic soldiers,/I gave up ideas of strangeness" (2006, 241). Witnessing the war break out near Barcelona she saw volunteers join the conflict. This act of international solidarity caused her to reflect on the wider meaning of the Spanish war: "Free Catalonia offered that day our changing/Age's hope and resistance, held in its keeping/The war this age must win in love and fighting" (241). Love and fighting are intimately connected in Spain, which became a struggle to redeem the age. In her 1937 poem "Mediterranean," printed in a booklet requesting medical donations in exchange for "the heartfelt thanks of a heroic people," Rukeyser described a less abstract form of love (608). While traveling by ship to cover the antifascist People's Olympiad in Barcelona, she met an athlete: "the brave man Otto Boch, the German exile" (145). The poem describes his "gazing Breughel face,/square forehead and eyes, strong square breast fading,/the narrow runner's hips." When the Civil War broke out five days into Rukeyser's stay, she was evacuated with other civilians while Boch stayed on to join: "Otto is fighting now … /No highlight hero. Love's not a trick of light" (150). Boch died in battle in 1938. He reappeared in Rukeyser's poems and prose writings throughout her career as a nexus point of erotic love, love of struggle, and sacrifice. His beauty is a placeholder for the life that would have been—had Spain been victorious.

This relationship to temporality resembles what Badiou calls a "nostalgia for the future." That is, the Spanish experiment elicits:

> the nostalgia for a grandeur and a beauty that have not yet been created. Communism here works in the future anterior: we experience a kind of poetic regret for what we imagine the world will have been when communism has come. (2014, 104)

This communist tense expresses "nostalgia for that which the world would be if this possible creation had already taken place." Whatever happens, the city of Madrid—like an object of great beauty lost to time, or else a beautiful person now martyred for a cause—once existed. Or the example of the lone sentry standing in the snow: even if just a figment of the poet's imagination, he continues to inspire a nostalgia for the future. Through identification, love holds open possible futures. In 1938's *The Book of the Dead*, Rukeyser was aware that the conflict held significance far exceeding just Spain or her own historical moment. Back in the USA, she sees:

"flashing new signals from the hero hills/near Barcelona, monuments and powers" (2006, 108). Linked together, parallel struggles are compressed into "seeds of unending love" that may sprout in the future (111).

Badiou's reading confirms what the poetry shows: the communist poetics-politics of the 1930s is focused on a "changing of subjectivity" (2014, 101). The love expressed in radical modern poems is centered on a practice of collective feeling. A coalition grounded in love despite distance and difference: this is what will have been established in human hearts when the brave volunteer is victorious. The poet too is like a sentry, keeping alive a vision of the world, however oblique, "from the standpoint of redemption" (Adorno 2005, 247).

Loving "The People"

Radical moderns were not only concerned with international identifications and the communist future but also national space and its historical past. One product of the Popular Front emphasis on the national-popular was new aesthetic approaches incorporating folk forms and even formerly taboo subjects like religion. In attempting to reach greater audiences, radical moderns not only produced poems about the people, they produced poetry *for* them. Poetry International used popular forms and tropes in order to stake new claims for love's power to unite a national collectivity.

Yannis Ritsos' "Epitaphios" (1986) draws on the dirge "Epitaphios Thrinos" used by the Greek Orthodox Church during Good Friday services. This poem's speaker is a mother who mourns not Christ but a young revolutionary, her son. It begins with a short contextualizing prologue:

> Salonica. May 1936. In the middle of the road a mother sings a dirge over her slain son. Waves of demonstration—the striking tobacco workers—roars and break around her. She continues her lament. (1986)

Ritsos composed the poem after seeing a newspaper photograph of this mourning mother. Her lament spans twenty sections of eight couplets containing elaborate images designed to elicit maximum pathos in the reader.

> My son, flesh of my flesh, dear heart of my heart,
> little bird in the poor courtyard, blossom in my desert,
>
> How is it that your eyes are closed and you do not see me cry …? (13)

Her political awakening begins when she questions why he was killed: "You asked for a bit of bread and they gave you a knife" (43). Moved by the piteous sight, the youth in the crowd comfort her. She begins to understand her son's struggle: "I see thousands of songs … They speak to me the way you used to … / and they have your cap, they are wearing your clothes" (45). Through this new class-consciousness, she joins the workers, who unite with other sections of society:

> The masses have grown courageous over the blood that has stained the earth:
> forests of fists, seas of shouts, mountains of hearts and chests.
>
> The work-shirt has joined the khaki, the soldier the laborer
> and everyone flashes a single heart—one will, one pulse, one eye.
>
> Oh, how beautiful it is when people join one another in love … (49)

The son is resurrected in the mother. She rises from the ground and declares: "My son, I'm going to your brothers and sisters and adding my rage. / I've taken your rifle. You, go to sleep my bird" (51). Love and rage are one.

Like the dirge on which "Epitaphios" is based, the poem moves from death to the promise of resurrection. Just as Mary and her companions mourn Christ, so the mother mourns her son with his fellow workers. The use of the familiar metrical form of decapentasyllabic rhyming couplets is no accident, as the poem's translator remarks: "the 'Epitaphios Thrinos' is known to all speakers of the language: men and women, young and old, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, of all political persuasions" (5). By mimicking the form and themes of a familiar cultural object, Ritsos showed that love was also about knowing one's audience. In adopting church liturgy, Ritsos offered a new vision of what it meant to be Greek. The authorities registered the danger of this alternative: Dictator Metaxas had Ritsos' poem ritually burned at the Temple of Olympian Zeus in Athens in 1938.

With its impassioned call for antifascist solidarity across the divisions of the body politic, Nâzım's "Epic of Sheikh Bedreddin" (1936) is also a locus classicus of the Popular Front aesthetic. The poem describes a fifteenth-century uprising in the Ottoman Empire led by the heretical proto-communist Sheikh Bedreddin. The story comes to its climax with the clash of the Sultan's forces with the ragtag army of the sheikh's followers. The army fighting to be "everywhere/all together/in everything" is composed of the whole range of Anatolian cultures: "Turkish peasants from Aydın,/Greek sailors from Chios,/Jewish tradesmen." All fight under the same "green-and-red flags" (Blasing 58). Ten thousand people band together because they share the same vision:

> That they might sing as one voice
> and together pull the nets from the water,
> that they might all work iron like lace
> and all together plow the earth,
> that they might eat the honeyed figs together.

By emphasizing the multi-ethnic, multi-confessional character of the uprising, Nâzım presents a fresh vision for intersectional alliances in the 1930s. In a postscript to the poem, he expressed pride that Anatolia "gave rise to a movement that considered the Greek sailors of Rhodes and Jewish merchants as brothers" (Ertürk 2011, 175). This left-populist vision is "national" without being chauvinistic. In "Bedreddin," Nâzım elaborates an event ostensibly within national historiography, but challenges official Turkish nationalism (built on the ethnic cleansing and genocide of non-Muslim minorities) by articulating an alternative understanding of who "the people" might be.

Radical moderns invested the Popular Front strategy of national alliances with an affective charge through overlapping identifications. For example, in Hughes's "Let America Be America Again" the speaker declares:

> I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,
> I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.
> I am the red man driven from the land,
> I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek. (190)

This expansive first person invests American populist platitudes with new meaning. It draws on a key figure from the US usable past: Walt Whitman. In "Song of Myself," Whitman identified with a "boatmen and clam-diggers," "a red girl," and "a runaway slave," whom he protects. This poetic persona possesses an indefatigable ability for identification. In Hughes' hands, identification is not mere humanistic fellow-feeling but the active forging of solidarity. Whereas Whitman idealized the USA as a radical democratic project, it is impossible to confuse Hughes' poem with patriotic nostalgia (or with the Trumpian slogan that it superficially resembles). "Let America Be America Again" is punctuated with the chorus: "America never was America for me" (189). The country is described not in terms of an ideal past but as a future-oriented project: "And yet I swear this oath—/American will be!" The poem's "I" will be part of a "land that's mine—the poor man's Indian's, Negro's, ME" (191). Hughes imagines a provisional form of interracial solidarity or "politically necessary coalitions" (Thurston 87) that create not sameness in the present but set the groundwork for a kind ofworking-class love in the future.

Denning argues that in the USA, the growth of a "Popular Front public culture sought to forge ethnic and racial alliances … by reclaiming the figure of 'America' itself" (1998, 9). A new "antifascist common sense in American culture" uncovered heroes and events that could be reinterpreted in terms of the present. For example, Rukeyser draws on the life of abolitionist John Brown (who raided the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry in 1859 with a cross-racial band of comrades) to articulate a usable past and potential future for the USA within a larger internationalist framework. In 1935's "The Lynching of Jesus," remembering is a form of love. At nineteen, Rukeyser left Columbia University to travel down to Alabama in support of the Scottsboro Nine. (This famous case of nine African American children falsely accused of raping a white woman became a central campaign of the USA 1930s.) Rukeyser's poem connects the "red brick courthouse" in Alabama to the trials of other revolutionary martyrs:

> John Brown, Nat Turner, Toussaint stand in this courtroom,
> Dred Scott wrestles for freedom there in the dark corner,
> all our celebrated shambles are repeated here: now again
> Sacco and Vanzetti walk to a chair … (2006, 29)

She uses religious imagery for these famous deaths, seeing both resistance and repression as part of an eternal cycle going back to Christ: "this latest effort to revolution stabbed/against a bitter crucificial tree" (25). She offers an international roll call of the "[m]any murdered in war, crucified, starved," including "Shelley, Karl Marx" (26) and "the lynched five thousand of America" (30). This sweeping historical vision creates a genealogy out of a national and international history of struggle that will end, like the religious narrative, in resurrection: "eternal return, until/the thoughtful rebel may triumph everywhere" (25). Out of defeat, victory.

Conclusion

While many of the threats of our contemporary moment (right-wing nationalism, economic crisis) and the responses to them (solidarity, intersectional alliances) resemble the 1930s, in terms of style and affect the cultural expressions emerging from oppositional movements today could not be more different. For example, today, it is the right that is most invested in mobilizing national signifiers. Yet perhaps this past should not be abandoned too soon. The appearance of the John Brown Gun Club (in Kansas, Arizona, and elsewhere in the USA) under the auspices of the antifa network Redneck Revolt shows that radical history can still be usefully mined for contemporary struggles. If clearly combined with internationalism, a 1930s-style strategic nationalism might still provide a helpful model.

Another important difference between today and the 1930s is formal. Poetry has lost its privileged position as a popular, oppositional form. It is difficult to imagine a Neruda-like figure commanding the attention of thousands of miners at a rally today, as he could in Chile up until the 1970s. While we should not discount the continuing (though beleaguered) popularity of verse in parts of the world,[5] the age of the poets is no more because the age of poetry is no more. Radical poets still exist of course (those associated with Commune Editions in Oakland are one example), but at least in the USA, today, the poetry produced by left-wing poets tends to be more academic, more milieu-based, and less portable beyond national borders than in the 1930s.

[5] In Greece, for example, poetry has been one of the most important cultural expressions of the crisis years (Van Dyck). Nâzım Hikmet's works continue to be widely known and popular.

If poetry as a medium is no longer dominant, what else exists? Film and television, both industrial art forms requiring massive production teams and global distribution networks, cannot travel as cheaply or easily as poems. A quasi-leftist film like *Black Panther* (2018) can be screened all over the world (at the cost of entertaining a CIA-vision of internationalism), but a more hard-hitting and class-conscious film like *Sorry To Bother You* (2018) had difficulty gaining international distribution because its concerns, partially focused on racial politics in the USA, are thought to be too "specific." If there are internationalist cultural forms today, they are even more ephemeral than in the 1930s. Memes, poster designs, slogans, images, and sometimes songs all crisscross the earth at record speed. Recent calls of solidarity—between Sudan and Algeria, Lebanon and Hong Kong, for example, or before that Palestine and Ferguson, or São Paulo and Gezi Park in Istanbul—show that the conjunction of certain place names that we saw in the listing/catalog technique of 1930s poetry can still have an affective charge. While cultural objects were produced out of these viral protest movements, they are surprisingly more nationally based. Hip-hop appears to have traveled most easily, but non-Anglophone examples (whether by the late Venezuelan musician Canserbero, Greek-Cypriot crew Social Waste, or French-Algerian rapper Médine) do not have the global reach one might expect. There are exceptions, like US rapper Childish Gambino's "This Is America" (2018). The music video for this incisive critique of violence and racism in the USA gave rise to immediate responses from rappers abroad, who uploaded copycat videos with new lyrics onto YouTube with titles like "This Is Iraq" and "This Is Nigeria." The Chilean feminist collective Las Tesis' performance/intervention "Un violador en tu camino" enjoyed a similar viral internationalism.

Yet it would be meaningless to attempt to revive the 1930s structure of feeling. As much as Poetry International focused on collective affects and the connections linking masses of people, this identificatory solidarity was always routed through the single, heroic poet-revolutionary. With both mobility and geographical displacement more widespread today, the masses no longer require globe-trotting representatives (mostly from the elite of their respective countries) to spread the good news across the world. Further, the masculinist Whitmanic "I" that steamrolls difference in its all-encompassing embrace runs contrary to the dominant emphasis on uneven racialized and gendered power structures. (Yet Whitman was

also a key figure for Rukeyser, who saw the poet's "androgyny" as essential to his capacity for identification [1996, 104]). In this sense, Hughes, with his skepticism of the homogenizing potential of love, might be most suited to our structure of feeling. He saw alliances as tactical and based in shared interests, not a vague populism:

> Black writers can seek to unite blacks and whites in our country, not on the nebulous basis of an interracial meeting … but on the solid ground of the daily working class struggle to wipe out, now and forever, all the old inequalities of the past. (2002, 89)

This more practical approach to the issue of "love" is one way to get past the censors of a cultural dominant that is highly allergic to sentimentality and over-earnestness. Identificatory approaches to the suffering of others can have an affirmative role, as Lauren Berlant remarks: "Popular culture relies on keeping sacrosanct this aspect of sentimentality—that 'underneath' we are all alike" (2008, 100). While radical moderns were aware that search for what is common was predicated on not shying away from one's enemies, today it is difficult not to read poetry centered on love—even if love as solidarity—as mawkish. "Our aesthetic categories," as Sianne Ngai's work demonstrates, are too precarious, ambivalent, and performance-based to rely on the centered subjective position of the 1930s radical modern (2015). The communist poetry of tomorrow—if there is to be such a thing—will have to be more collective, more steeped in negation, more feminist, and less amenable to narrow nationalist or multiculturalist recuperation, or it will not be at all.

Lest we treat our predecessors too unfairly, however, it is helpful to heed these admonishing words of Ritsos and remember that revolutionary culture is always produced within the limits of its own period:

> And if our verses
> will someday strike you as clumsy, remember
> that they were written
> under noses of guards and always with the bayonets ready by our side. (2013, 31)

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Fig. 14.1 Shoes on the Danube Promenade (Holocaust Memorial), Can Togay and Gyula Pauer (2005)

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CHAPTER 14

Parallel Stories: The Rise of Far-Right Women's Movements in the 1930s and 2010s

Andrea Pető

Józsefné Thoma, a medical doctor, once wrote that, "We demand for ourselves equal rights with men in the field of honor. We are aware that this means equal obligations and duties. May we refuse to accept a separation between male honor and female honor! We protest when people say that a woman's lies can be forgiven and are 'endearing', […] and we protest when the word 'lady-speech' is dismissed with a wave of the hand" (Thoma undated: 14). Dr. Thoma set up consciousness-raising groups and helped women to gain leadership positions in 1930s Hungary (Fig. 14.1).

Thoma could be celebrated as a proto-feminist if it wasn't for the uneasy facts that this quote is from educational material for women of the Arrow Cross Party, the Hungarian Nazi Party during World War II, and that Thoma was a leader in the party's women's section. One feels the same unease when reading other demands by other far-right politicians, such as the demand to end structural inequality, unpaid labor, and sexual

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_14

harassment at the workplace—especially given that protection against uncertainty and harassment was extended only to Hungarian women. The Arrow Cross Party—whose short rule lasted from October 15, 1944 until April 4, 1945—formed a government with the help of the occupying Nazi forces at a moment when this party was the only political force guaranteeing unlimited access to resources of Hungary to the Germans. The Arrow Cross rule left Hungary in ruins by the spring of 1945. No matter that the quickest deportation of 500,000 Jewish Hungarian happened during the Horthy regime, the persecution of Jews continued with local killings and forced marches to the West during the Arrow Cross rule.

Can history repeat itself today as another version of the 1930s? Are we re-living the Weimar moment? Or have we already left the Weimar moment behind us without even noticing it? In Hungary, this question emerges as attacks on reproductive rights fill the headlines and government-sponsored billboards promote motherhood and condemn abortion, while the allegedly mainstream right-wing Hungarian government increasingly adopts positions previously espoused by the far right. This contemporary discourse might suggest that a re-run is in effect, but through a comparison of Hungarian women's far-right mobilizations in the 1930s and in the 2010s, I will demonstrate that there are more differences than similarities between the two periods. I also suggest that there is not much of a basis for optimism about the future (Pető 2009a, 147–154).

However, an analysis of these period studies will shed a light on similarities and differences as far as the emergence of anti-modernist emancipation, a backlash against the changes in women's situation after World War I and 2008 are concerned. Far-right politics offered different options for women's participation and pro-women ideas. Hilary Pilkington (2016) refers to far-right politics as a "slippery subject," as the far right creatively transforms itself by including and omitting combinations of issues depending on political opportunities. This chapter addresses a long-term blind spot in far-right research, which has just recently started analyzing the motivations and agency of politically extremist women (Köttig et al. 2016). I argue that this "slippery subject" can also transform into something fundamentally new, as is now the case.

In making a comparison of the present with the 1930s, the 1944 German occupation of Hungary and the triple crisis (financial, refugee and security) of 2008, I draw upon two distinctly different narrative sources. First, is the set of testimonies of women charged as war criminals in front

of the people's tribunals after World War II in Hungary (Pető 2007, 335–349; 2014, 107–131; Barna and Pető 2015). The people's tribunals were legal institutions expected to mark the end of a dark era, though they were generally lenient toward female perpetrators because of the gender bias of the court. Still, the women's narratives presented to the court offer rare insights into Arrow Cross Party mobilization.

Based on these files, I reconstructed the motives and beliefs of several far-right women—intellectuals, relatives of party functionaries, administrators, wives, artists, and simple criminals—who supported the Arrow Cross Party. They rejected the mainstream "conservative offer" of the interwar Horthy regime (Papp and Sipos 2017) as its discourse was pushing women back to kitchen and family and it was unappealing to wage-earning and professional women. These women of the Arrow Cross also rejected the leftist emancipation project of trade unions, communists, and social democrats since they supported anti-Semitic, anticommunist rhetoric of the Horthy government which blamed Jews and communists for the loss of World War I.

My second set of data is drawn from interviews I conducted in the early 2000s with prominent female members of the then-emerging far-right subculture: activists, members of the Parliament, intellectuals, journalists, and elected representatives in municipalities (Pető 2003). This period was the golden age of neoliberalism in Hungary under the government of the Hungarian Socialist Party. These women were not taken seriously either by their own party members or by their ideological opponents. When I approached them for interviews, they were surprised and proud, hoping to gain both the historical significance and visibility they lacked through the interview process. I recorded the narratives of women who shared their stories with me—a well-known progressive intellectual—who they knew belonged to a different political community. In avoiding the trap of being considered as a potential convert, I occupied the position of a learner: I wanted to learn about their motivations for entering politics and the far right. By now, these interviewees have become prominent members of the political establishment of Hungary, but we still have polite small talk if we meet. I therefore consider these interviews to have been mutually beneficial, in which the views, dignity, and agency of the interviewees have been acknowledged.

Political Rights as Basis for Far-Right Mobilization in the 1930s and Today

After World War I, women's newly acquired right to vote forced different political parties to reconsider their neglect of women as political agents. At the same time, "woman" and especially "the new woman" (a financially independent subject who ignored patriarchal expectations) emerged as an unpredictable and dangerous element that threatened male hegemony in economic, political, and cultural spheres (Pető 2009b, 48–52). Thus, far-right parties were met with a considerable challenge in shaping policies on women's issues. Besides the changes caused by the lost war and the failed revolutions, the Horthy regime also had to adapt to the transformations in gender politics.

It was in 1920 due to the armistice with the Entente Hungarian that women received limited suffrage but at same time women's employment rate showed a steady increase. But while 40% of the population was enfranchised in 1921, the percentage dropped to 27% by 1930, which contributed to major political problems such as increasing political radicalism. The conservative political elite of Horthy's Hungary were caught in a trap, as their conservative, antidemocratic political system was challenged both from the left by the social democrats and from emerging far right supported by Nazi Germany.

The power and visibility women had gained during World War I was increasingly erased. During the interwar period, women's suffrage was restricted and attempts were made to restrict women's enrollment in higher education (Pető and Szapor 2004, 172–182). The change was striking: within a decade, women were working as doctors, scientists, and teachers, in places where female employees had been previously unimaginable. At the same time, a new concern emerged: the threat of workplace discrimination. According to a 1938 survey conducted, 60% of Hungarian women with higher educational degrees had experienced workplace discrimination in some form (Papp 2004, 75). The Arrow Cross Party offered an anti-modernist emancipatory project which quickly became very popular among employed women.

This was the backdrop against which the Arrow Cross Party broke onto the Hungarian scene. Far-right political parties had steady and growing support in various electoral districts from 1920 onwards. The Arrow Cross Party, after uniting different far-right parties and movements, was the only political force which had a political offer on the right for women

who were employed, ambitious, and active. The party struggled to cope with the fact that its official gender policy, which was too similar to the "conservative offer" of the Horthy regime, was rejected by many women who otherwise sympathized with the party's ideology and who would have been useful party members. As a response, the party provided political space for the realization of female autonomy by promoting the cult of ancient (pre-Christian) Hungarian women as equal to their men. This is why many women joined the Arrow Cross; they were driven by a rejection of the existing conservative, patriarchal order where they were confined to the private sphere as mothers and wives. The "slippery subject" mobilized women, with some districts having 30% of members as women.

The narrative testimonies of women at the people's tribunal is one of the very few sources describing the motivations of women who joined the Arrow Cross Party. These testimonies represent a mediated truth, as these women fine-tuned and performed their stories in a court where a proper testimony could lead to acquittal while a wrong one could lead to a harsh sentence. The stories presented at court by women about their motivations to join the Arrow Cross Party mostly fitted into a normative far-right image of femininity, an image based on motherhood. They were rewarded with lighter sentences than those who proudly shared social and political agendas for joining the Arrow Cross Party.

The complexity of women's political and economic motives within women's far-right political mobilization is present in both the 1930s and the 2010s. For example, in the 1930s the radicalization of women prompting their eventual political mobilization was often connected to their employment experience. Those who, at great individual cost, managed to graduate from university were confronted with discrimination in the workplace (Pető 2008, 63–83). Their political radicalism was a reaction to rigid social hierarchies, to gender discrimination, and to poverty, best exemplified by the case of first generation of Hungarian female medical doctors like Dr. Thoma. As a political force, the far right promoted a form of citizenship that guaranteed active political agency to women in an otherwise conservative political regime founded on gender-based exclusion and a cult of domesticity. Furthermore, statements made by far-right women at the people's tribunal's hearings often revealed individual economic needs as motives for stealing Jewish property.

In 1989, liberal elites in Central Europe shared the optimism of transnational institutions, offering voters a business-as-usual approach to modernization which privileged policies over ideas. Gender studies scholars were less enthusiastic and more critical about the price women paid for the post-1989 transition as far as unemployment, pay gap, and segregation were concerned (Fodor and Horn 2015; Pető 2015). Many women political extremists I interviewed described the post-1989 neoliberalization of Eastern Europe as a failed promise. Their stories followed more or less the same line: they expressed concerns about the increase of poverty and discrimination and interspersed them with anti-elitist slogans. The stories of compensation for loss were present in interviews I made in the early 2000s. Women joining the far-right movements after 1989, even those who did not come from families who suffered persecution during communism, unanimously narrated their family stories before 1989 as lists of losses. After 1989, anticommunism became the dominant narrative frame which was conveniently available for nearly everybody. But the interpretation and presentation of women's political-economic experiences have to be viewed in light of waxing global neoliberalism.

The triple crises of 2008: financial, security, and migration made the already visible cracks of the neoliberal world order visible. On the individual level, both left and right voters were suffering from the same factors, but the leftists—due to the trap that these were the leftist parties which promoted neoliberal policies in Eastern Europe—are not in a position to criticize neoliberalism. As in the 1930s in the early 2000s, the leftist critique of capitalist production was not an option, and this necessarily pushed women toward right-wing political radicalism.

"Neoliberal neopatriarchy" (Campbell 2014) had dire consequences for equality politics globally. While it might ostensibly support a narrow and market-oriented version of gender equality, it has simultaneously dismantled the welfare state, undermined social solidarity, and rejected structural reforms needed to reach genuine equality. The result is a system which accepts some token women in positions of power, but leaves masses of women behind. As a consequence, progress in reaching gender equality has stagnated in the last two decades, adding to a general feeling of frustration and disappointment with equality politics in general. This has led many women to doubt the sincerity of the equality paradigm itself (especially within the framework of neoliberal policy) and to seek alternative forms of empowerment in antimodernist and nationalist projects such

as familialism or far-right extremism (Pető 2011). Similarly, Nazi and fascist parties were able to attract considerable support by women voters in the interwar years as they offered support, security, and economic possibility in a society with growing inequalities.

In literature covering interwar Europe, there is consensus about the trigger moment for the rise of far-right movements: the 1929 financial crises. How might the triple—financial, security, and "refugee"—crises of 2008 be considered as our era's trigger moment? As Berezin demonstrated in depicting the rise of the National Front in France, the process of European political, economic, and cultural integration, guided by the neoliberal doctrine, resulted in a gradual dismantling of European institutions and re-embedded people into their national policy frameworks (Berezin 2009, 2013, 241). The consequent weakening of citizens' political, social, economic, and cultural security leads to insecurity and fear, which has been further boosted by the triple crisis of the European project—financial, security, and refugee—that revealed cracks in the foundations of the post-national world. Within a landscape largely devoid of sources of security on the European level and a lack of electable left-wing alternative projects, these crises created a culture in which right-wing answers to the emergent problems were supported by mainstream politicians and eventually began to appear "normal" (Berezin 2013, 242). Similar dynamics were at play during the 1930s, except there was a leftist alternative at that time: the Stalinist Soviet Union. It took some years and revolutions killed by Soviet tanks in 1956 and 1968 for this alternative to become finally discredited. At the moment, alternatives are not presented as one country but rather as alternative streams and subcultures within countries. The role of transnationalism is increasing as the importance of locality and local resistance is increasing.

Political Infrastructure: Organizations and Media Presence

Discussing similarities and differences in women's political activism between the 1930s and today has often escaped the attention of historians partly because women's activity has not been limited to party politics, but also manifest at informal gatherings such as tea parties and other "alternative public spaces" which leave no written documents behind (Pető and Szapor, ibid.). This is especially true for supporters of nonmainstream politics like far-right extremisms. The arenas in which political citizenship has

been exercised are also definable in terms of class: only exceptionally did women get close to the formal decision-making level. In the Arrow Cross, however, wives of party leaders ran an important informal network which played a significant role in the distribution of jobs and sharing information about employment vacancies.

Today in Hungary the institutional network of far-right women and the identity, principles, and future political vision of the far-right women's movement remain "under construction." Women can create a space for promoting their own agenda if they do not question male hegemony. This agenda incorporates a variety of demands such as the formation of a strong, protective, responsible state and offering welfare provisions (originally leftist planks). They mobilize women along cultural and symbolic lines related to identity issues. Members share their views on various issues, even those concerning intimacy, sexuality, or behavioral and dress codes. They reach back (without any critical reflection) for symbols and discourse patterns to pre-1945 Hungary, which is interesting in the framework of resistance to communism. The resistance to communism presents an alibi for not coming to terms with Hungary's role as an ally of Nazi Germany in World War II and murdering 600,000 of its citizens (Pető 2017, 41–51). This anachronistic revival of pre-1945 women's mobilization patterns contributes to a perception that there is a continuity and similarity of the present with pre-1945 ideas, movements, and patterns.

Troubling Complexity: The "Catch All" Mobilization

Historical analogies are selective and simplifying, and they tend to render certain actors invisible. This is especially true for the "slippery subject," as far-right mobilization is a "catch all" mobilization. Based on my analysis of the people's tribunal files, women associated with the Arrow Cross Party formed four separate yet heterogeneous groups (Matthée and Pető 2008, 285–303). The first group consisted of women who had already joined other far-right parties in the 1920s. They were mainly disillusioned white-collar women, such as typists and bookkeepers. Many of them had come to "truncated Hungary" (as the country was referred to following the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, according to which Hungary lost two-thirds of its pre-World War I territories) as ethnic Hungarian refugees from areas ceded to the successor states of Austria-Hungary

after 1919. For these women, the newly founded Arrow Cross Party offered a framework for social integration in their chosen country. Often single, these working women believed that their professional and social mobility had been hindered by a conservative political regime with its emphasis on women's place in the home. For this reason, they supported radical political solutions, in particular those offered by the far right.

The second group was comprised of lower-middle-class or working-class women who had committed criminal acts during World War II. They exploited the Holocaust to take revenge and to "redistribute" social goods. This group included some mentally ill women as well as others who clearly suffered from psychological problems. These women formed the largest group of defendants at the People's Tribunal.

The third group consisted of rebellious and revolutionary women from middle-class or upper-middle-class backgrounds. They were educated, wore men's clothing, and rode horses just like men. Although these women appeared to be emancipated, rejected patriarchy, and had gained access to areas formerly closed to their gender, they were marked by anti-modernism as their identity had been formed against a European modernity that brought only inequality and gender discrimination to them. Therefore, they reached for examples of strong women from Hungarian history from the time of the conquest of the Carpathian Basin in the tenth century, celebrating their autonomy and independence in a pagan tradition.

The fourth group was the best-known and most visible in the public discourse. They were female family members of Arrow Cross leaders. Most were from middle-class or upper-middle-class backgrounds, but unlike the third group, they had no professional aspirations; their public identity was that of "wife" or "supporter" to a husband or relative. They often ran supporting businesses of the far right such as publishing, ethnic clothing, and social and media enterprises.

Likewise, women who founded far-right organizations during the 2000s when far-right politics were outside of the mainstream had varied social backgrounds and career trajectories. Those who had a chance for professional careers came from families connected to the new political elite, had grown children, or were childless. Nearly all four groups of far-right women from the interwar years are present today except the third one. These women found a space in far-right politics to live outside of conventional gender norms of the Horthy regime. In today's politics,

these radical women find a political space in a progressive and inclusive subculture.

Women activists in both periods aimed to create a livable and desirable alternative consisting of values, institutions, and symbolic systems as a form of critique of oppressive gender regimes. Their agendas cut across traditional right/left political cleavages to challenge an existing party system. The way they envisioned these alternatives was a reflection of the weaknesses and mistakes of their era's progressive politics. And, of course, far-right politics today (as in the 1930s) has been unquestionably increasing its electoral support during the last decade. Still, neither a structural explanation (based on the triple crises of 2008, allegedly similar to the 1929 crisis) nor the claim that a silent majority is gaining a voice, nor the Deleuzian explanation that a quest for security acts as a driving force toward fascism is fully adequate for explaining the gendered *modus operandi* of today's illiberal states (Grzebalska and Pető 2018). Furthermore, I argue that thinking in historical analogies is helpful but limited and may delay the recognition of today's true political challenges.

From a Failed State Capture to a Successful Polypore State

The main difference between the situation of the 1930s and today lies in the relationship and the functioning of the state to the public. The Arrow Cross Party, while enjoying strong support among the civil servants, especially by transport workers and the police, was a despised subculture which failed to take over the state during the last months of World War II when the Red Army was approaching the country. But now, we are witnessing a quiet and successful process of building up a new form of state. And this is the fact which makes the present situation worse than the 1930s. With Weronika Grzebalska, I argue that illiberal European Union member states can best be understood as majoritarian nationalist responses to a systematic preponderance of globalized neoliberal democracy which has shaped relationships between individuals and the state during the last four decades. Illiberal states are reaching back to the third way ideology of the 1930s: they offer what appears to be a desirable, viable, and livable alternative to established ideologies of conservatism and liberalism while challenging international socialism understood as the progressive European tradition.

As far as the inadequate response from mainstream politics to economic crisis and with regard to the lost promise of women's suffrage, the failures of conservative politics led to the radicalization of the mainstream in interwar Europe. In following contemporary mainstream leftist responses to the refugee crisis, it is difficult to trace where political extremism begins. Preexisting fears reframed what could be acceptable as policy, and as a reaction, extreme discourses and ideas became normalized with either explicit mainstream support or simple non-action. The weak commitment of semi-peripheral elites and the public to the liberal system contributes to a profound institutional crisis undermining the legitimacy of democracy.

George Mosse in his oft-quoted *Masses and Man* wrote about fascism as an "amoeba-like absorption of ideas from mainstream of popular thought and culture, countered by the urge towards activism and taming" in addition to a ruthless dismantling of the liberal parliamentary order (Mosse 1987, 183). This definition depends on the understanding of the "slippery subject" as its modus operandi. With Grzebalska, I suggest using the biological metaphor of the polypore to shed light on the crucial differences between the 1930s and today.

In terms of its gendered modus operandi, an illiberal regime can best be understood as a polypore state, a parasitic organism, which feeds on the vital resources of its host while contributing to its decay, and only produces a fully dependent state structure in return (Grzebalska and Pető 2018). On the one hand, illiberal "polyporism" involves exploiting and appropriating various aspects of the European liberal democratic project including but not limited to its institutions, procedures, concepts, and funding opportunities. Contrary to popular belief, Hungarian FIDESZ is not interested in leaving the EU or rejecting its basic concepts as human rights or gender equality. Rather, they wish to exploit funding and political opportunities offered by the EU while pursuing their own political agenda.

On the other hand, "polyporism" involves the illiberal regime divesting resources from those it considers the beneficiaries of the "corrupt liberal postcommunist system"—the already existing human rights and civil society sector in order to transfer those resources to its own base to secure and enlarge it. Moreover, just as the polypore usually attacks already damaged trees, illiberals rise to power primarily in the context of weak state institutions, divided progressive parties, and failing liberal democratic projects.

In the polypore state, far-right extremism is incorporated to legitimize and to maintain the very existence of the polypore.

The operation of the illiberal polypore state is gendered, an aspect which escaped the attention of scholars analyzing recent developments. The illiberal polypore state is working with securitization as public policy discourses are becoming security issues. The imagined threat by migrants, gender studies scholars, or George Soros is a constitutive part of the governance. The second aspect is familialism where women are subjects of policy making only as members of a family unit. And last, it is constructing alternative NGOs that mirror existing institutions with state funding.

I argue that because of these three gendered aspects of the polypore state, illiberalism should not be perceived as a revival of authoritarianism but rather as a new form of governance developing out of previous democratic concepts and institutions. This new form can be better understood by going beyond a routine comparative analysis of political systems along the East-West divide to instead trace the gradual sociopolitical developments in these countries while placing them in the context of broader global processes. While postcommunist democracies have their own sociohistorical legacies, the fact that illiberal tendencies are increasing all across Europe suggests that they should be viewed as local symptoms of broader structural failures of the European(neo)liberal democratic project, a dark legacy of Europeanization in its current form (see Grzebalska 2016).

In interwar Europe, Nazi Germany and fascist Italy were presented as success stories while their victorious military campaigns lasted, which gave legitimacy to far-right activism in Hungary and elsewhere. Presently, Russia and Turkey are discouraging examples as far as economic potentials and way of life are concerned, besides which both countries acted as occupying forces for a time in Hungarian history making political alliances with them politically difficult. The game changer in the history of antiliberalism has been that official US foreign policy and Christian conservative forces have started to support the anti-human-rights trend, a movement previously only supported by Russia and Turkey with funding and political influence (Fitzgerald and Provost 2019).

Certainly, the illiberal polypore state will be with us for a longer period as the life energy and ideas stemming from the tree contribute to its livelihood and therefore the vital interest of the polypore state is to keep the tree alive up to a certain and controlled limit. Thoma joined the Arrow Cross Party as she found space for her political ambitions of fighting for women's rights and social justice in a racist and antisemitic party. The

failure of the leftist political forces to offer a viable, livable, and desirable political option for many women is definitely a similarity between the 1930s and today.

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Fig. 15.1 Libertà di Opinione by Vauro Senesi (2019). Image provided by courtesy of the artist

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CHAPTER 15

(Post)Fascists, the Constitution, and the Defense of the Italian Nation

David Broder

Rhetorically infused with democracy, the defense of working people, and the spirit of resistance to fascism, the Italian Constitution is among the most progressive-spirited in all Western countries. Written by the anti-fascist parties after liberation in 1945 (as well as the referendum to abolish the monarchy the following year), its principles for decades figured especially strongly in the self-narration of Italy's second largest party—the mass Italian Communist Party (PCI)—and the wider labor movement (Fig. 15.1).

To invoke the "constitution written by the partisans" served both as callback to the role of popular mobilization in the defeat of Nazi-fascism and as a programme of social aspirations to be realized in the present. Throughout its Cold War-era exclusion from national government, the PCI invoked the constitutional assertion that Italy is a "democratic republic founded on labor" (Article 1), as well as this document's insistence on removing the socio-economic barriers to freedom, equality, and workers' full participation in economic and democratic life (Article 3).

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_15

Even after the 1991 dissolution of the PCI, historically linked associations like the ANPI (National Association of Italian Partisans) have continued this crusade, portraying the constitution as both a national asset and a signal achievement of antifascism. Yet when, in December 2016, centrist Prime Minister Matteo Renzi sought to change the constitution to strengthen the executive, the biggest voting blocs in defense of the status quo came from outside the historic Left—the Five Star Movement (M5s) and, to a lesser extent, the Lega.

These parties' No campaign entailed a large measure of opportunism—the referendum was, from these parties' perspectives, above all a matter of unseating Renzi, who had promised to resign in case of defeat. Their primary focus on the next election—and relative lack of interest in the content of the constitution—thus differed from left-wingers in Renzi's own party who campaigned for No, and who after his defeat founded a new party called Articolo Uno. Yet both the Lega and M5s—two forces unrelated to the "constitutional arch" which wrote this document in 1946–1947, or even their successor parties—portrayed Renzi's initiative as an assault on republican traditions. This had an element of the paradoxical, for while neither party is connected to the historic filiation of Italian fascism, both stand distant from the antifascist culture of the post-1945 constitutional arch. In contrast to Lega Nord founder Umberto Bossi, the now-"national" party's leader Matteo Salvini has repeatedly flirted with CasaPound (a neofascist movement built around an occupied social center in the capital); for their part, M5s leaders have invoked the idea of "marching on Rome," while also portraying the public commemoration of antifascism as part of a grey institutional political correctness. Even more remarkable is the approach taken towards the constitution in recent years by forces who *do* directly descend from, or identify with, the fascist tradition. These notably include Fratelli d'Italia (a "national conservative," "postfascist" force descended from the post-war Movimento Sociale Italiano, MSI) and the younger, more radical, and smaller CasaPound.

These forces have sought to appropriate the constitution in two distinct ways, either as a basis for legitimization (i.e. by identifying with an unproblematically antifascist document) or, more subversively, as a tool for questioning the established parties' claim to stand for the Republic's professed social values. Fratelli d'Italia's emphasis on this former theme especially owes to its roots in the postfascist milieu of the 1990s, and in particular Alleanza Nazionale—the vehicle by which former MSI cadres

like Gianfranco Fini and Gianni Alemanno sought a place in Silvio Berlusconi's center-right alliance. Amidst the collapse of the "constitutional arch" parties at the end of the Cold War, in the 1994 general election, the *camerati* of the MSI made a bid for unoccupied political territory, seeking to create a pro-European conservative force within Berlusconi's coalition, akin to Spain's Partido Popular (itself founded by former Francoite officials). This was a contradictory process—leader Fini ultimately journeyed to the liberal center while others colleagues (including both Alemanno and Alessandra Mussolini) joined Berlusconi's own Popolo della Libertà.

There were broader circumstances behind the legitimization of these forces. With the rise, in the 1990s and 2000s, of revisionist pop-history accounts of World War II,[1] as well as Berlusconi's own trolling comments about Il Duce, a postfascist could seek rehabilitation by terming fascism as an "absolute evil" (Fini) or describing the values of the resistance to Nazism as "universal" (as former MSI youth leader Gianni Alemanno put it after his election to the Rome mayoral office in 2008) even while drawing focus to the PCI's historic crimes. The framing device for this shift was, precisely, the embrace of constitutional mores, in the guise of democratic respectability and the rejection of violence. This is the operation reproduced in the present by Giorgia Meloni's Fratelli d'Italia. Created in 2012, it has regrouped most of the postfascist milieu in an independent party, whose logo integrates that of the old MSI, allied to the Lega and Berlusconi's Forza Italia.

Different from this bid for institutional respectability—though overlapping in some respects—is the approach of CasaPound, on which we shall focus in this article. Despite its more stridently anti-systemic character, it far more consistently invokes the specific values of the constitution (as it interprets them) in defense of an explicitly fascist programme suited "for the third millennium." This subcultural force, whose media presence far outstrips its electoral scores (below 1% in national contests), promotes itself as "filling in" for both a Left, which has abandoned poor and working-class Italians, and policemen supposedly restrained from dealing with crime by immigrants. In this regard, CasaPound is notable for

[1] Note in particular the novelised histories of the Resistance period by Giampaolo Pansa, invoking the "history of the defeated." For an interesting account of the neo-fascists' own self-exculpation through historical memory—for instance, through the myths of the unrealised promise of the Salò Republic, or the supposed role of fascists in saving Jews—see Germinario 1999.

its "anticapitalist" rhetoric, which goes beyond the Catholic-paternalist, protectionist, or "communitarian" spin that postfascists like Alemanno (and the "Destra Sociale" current) or indeed Fratelli d'Italia have put on their conservative politics. While these varied forces (and other nostalgic militant circles like Fiamma Tricolore or Roberto Fiore's Forza Nuova) all make up part of the "family album" of Italian fascism, CasaPound has gone furthest of all in appropriating rhetoric, talking points, and practices more commonly associated with the historical left, in particular in the defense of the constitution. This can take the form, common to far-right circles in other countries, of a simple appeal to "free speech." This was notable in the case of the controversy around its publisher Altaforte's participation at the Turin book fair in May 2019 (which was ultimately blocked). Yet it also occurs on the more substantive ground of economics and democratic sovereignty, as CasaPound poses as a fighter against neoliberal globalization.

Sansepolcrismo 2.0?

A pinch of salt may be in order here. How seriously are we to take CasaPound's statements on economic policy or jurisprudence? When we look at it for what it really is—not a mass movement or indeed a regime-in-waiting, but a perhaps 2000-strong militant subculture with pretensions of grandeur—we might doubt the importance of its programmatic claims. CasaPound's recruitment of young people from football hooligan circles or its own student organization Blocco Studentesco seems defined by sociality—sport, street brawling, music, clothing, and networks of friends and family—rather than the particular seductive force of its political treatises. Yet even the ideological framing of this kind of activity—one able to give militants the sense that their collective can project itself into public life as a "serious" political force—can make use of more conventional instruments of party organization, for instance the CasaPound publisher and bookshop, its debates and summer school (*Rivoluzione*), and indeed its magazine, *Il Primato Nazionale*. The ideas contained within this publication give us a sense not only of what this force wants to tell its members about their activity, but also about the historical moment that it expresses. That is, it gives us insight into which parts of the fascist tradition might be considered relevant to our own time in connection with other elements of the cultural context. Following historians like Roger Griffin, it can, indeed, be worth taking fascists' ideas seriously.

In particular, *Il Primato Nazionale* shows CasaPound's extreme ideological flexibility, not only projecting its particular fascist ideas onto the terrain of rival, more mainstream forces, but also seeking to conquer the space left open by other forces who have changed their political alignments. This is evident even in its self-description. Not only does *Il Primato Nazionale* call itself a *periodico sovranista* (harking back to *Sovranità*, a short-lived 2015 front created by CasaPound and the Lega) but also adopts the classic phraseology of M5s by counterposing itself to the "ultimate expression of the *casta*"—the media (Scianca 2019).

Yet more remarkable, however, is CasaPound's raid on such a totemic flagship of the left and anti-fascism as the constitution, including its specific socio-economic premises. This was visible in the social center's campaign for the March 2018 general election—indeed, point 16 of CasaPound's programme insisted upon "the real application of the constitution" in economic matters. An article in *Il Primato Nazionale* even presented CasaPound as the only force who understood what the constitutional framers had intended in the field of economic policy (La Redazione [de Il Primato Nazionale] 2018). Citing the discussions in the postwar Constitutional Assembly's Third Sub-Commission, focused on socio-economic questions (here wrongly cited as the Second), this article identifies CasaPound with both the constitutional invocation of the protection of labor and the need for the state to intervene where private property and market competition contrast with the well-being of society.

At this level of abstraction, it is no surprise that resonances exist between fascism and the socialist and Keynesian ideas that shaped mass politics at different points from the late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. In fascism's historic competition with the Marxist left, a long tradition of "socially" oriented currents has promised to place limits on private property or otherwise direct capital in the national interest: one of the much-proclaimed "achievements" of Benito Mussolini's regime was its Labor Code, and the creation of the Institute for National Reconstruction (IRI) in 1933 provided an at least embryonic basis for *dirigiste* policies in the postwar period (Parlato 2006, 2008). Beyond the actual economic policies of the regime (whose overall record on labor rights, conditions, and pay was nothing short of woeful), such a "social" fascism can draw on the various unfulfilled projects attached to it by its intellectual outriders. CasaPound can especially be identified in the tradition of what historian Giuseppe Parlato calls the "fascist left" of the regime period—the "revolutionary" and "syndicalist" current built around such 1930s journals as

Lo Stato Corporativo or *Lavoro Fascista*, and complemented in neofascist self-narration by such reference points as Georges Sorel, the original fascist programme of 1919 (known as *sansepolcrismo*) and the "socialization measures" decreed by the Verona Congress of 1943, under a Salò Republic now shorn of the monarchy as well as most of its ruling-class support.

CasaPound is unembarrassed about such connections—it was no surprise that it hosted a presentation of Parlato's own book. But particularly interesting, for our purposes, is the way that—just like historical fascism—CasaPound continually attaches the ideas of its own tradition to others drawn from other cultural matrices. Indeed, with the main political forces of the Constituent Assembly period today having disappeared (especially the Communists, Socialists, and Christian Democrats, each of which broke up in the early 1990s), CasaPound is freed to appropriate the constitution as a national heritage now released from the political antagonisms—and the anti-fascist culture—of the immediate postwar period. This is especially notable in the weekly *Il Primato Nazionale* column by non-member Diego Fusaro. A pupil of Marxist philosopher Costanzo Preve and one of the most televised "public intellectuals" in Italy, Fusaro has radicalized Preve's own nationalist positions to become a leading interlocutor (and legitimizer) of CasaPound in the most mainstream media. In a 2012 piece for *Il Primato Nazionale*, Fusaro shone a light on the rhetorical focus of the neofascist party as he portrayed Italian elites' own bid to break with the postwar constitution. Where former Bank of Italy Governor Guido Carli had criticized this document as "the point of intersection between the Catholic and the Marxist conceptions of the relations between society and state," Fusaro claimed the "global-elitist," "post-democratic," "no border," "free market" elite now sought to cast this aside.

It is not hard to see why such ideas could gain "cut-through"—or why CasaPound would want to promote them. The last three decades of economic stagnation and crisis have, in fact, seen the blue-collar electorate become the single most volatile element of the Italian political panorama, now unbound from its historic ties to the Left, with categories like the unemployed and the owners of small businesses also unbound from traditional party containers. The main heir to the Communist Party, the Democrats (PD) today have an especially direct class correlation, in the sense that wealthier Italians are *more* likely to vote for it, while it scores under 10% support among blue-collar and unemployed Italians. This change in the class connotation of a "center-left" strongly associated

with institutional Italy has, moreover, been allied to its strong rhetorical shift away from the protection of workers in favor of liberal Europeanism. Though CasaPound is too small for us to gain reliable data on where its voters really come from (and indeed, its lack of mass following casts doubts over its ability to exceed a subcultural *voto d'opinione*), it has clearly chosen to frame itself as a polar opposite to the PD, in defense of those this latter party has "betrayed." It hence combines a discourse of economic protection with an identitarian revolt against the (allegedly) combined forces of economic globalization, the single currency, and the rise of what the far-right call "fuschia" identity politics. With scant prospects of economic recovery and the left moving away from the material defense of workers, CasaPound like other far-right forces can instead hope to engage downwardly mobile Italians on the terrain of "cultural protection"—defending the values of the humiliated poor against cosmopolitan and culturally liberal elites.

This bid to strip the constitution from its antifascist origins and ally it to a series of reactionary signifiers also helps us understand why Fusaro's own claims to be a "Marxist" or "Gramscian" philosopher should not be taken too seriously. Reliant on a farcical decontextualization and dehistoricization of the (communist) figures he is talking about, Fusaro's efforts consist of removing the materialism from Marxism and reducing Antonio Gramsci to a transhistorical cultural theorist. While Fusaro is anything but unique in that regard, and perhaps not subjectively a fascist, his public interventions perform a classically fascist function of adopting elements of the Marxist thought-system while subordinating them to an opposed, exclusive conception of solidarity based on nationalism only. In autumn 2019, he announced plans for a new party called Vox (named after the recent Francoite split from the Spanish Partido Popular) whose founding statement promised that it would combine "left-wing ideas with right-wing values"). An especially notable aspect of Fusaro's discourse is his use of queues of epithets designed to link together different ideas while impoverishing each of them. Especially widely mocked on social media is his recurrent tendency to speak in terms of "turbo-capitalism," "hyper-globalization," or "super-liberalism." These compounds are designed to give the idea of an accelerating destruction of previous social structures, yet at the same time point back to a more regulated, less intensely competitive capitalism restricted within national bounds.

Nonetheless, this also serves the purpose of recoding the Marxist and Catholic inspirations for the Italian Constitution as simply "national" in character, thus allowing them to be counterposed to neoliberal assumptions which are instead projected onto the global level. For Fusaro, writing in *Il Primato Nazionale*, the European Union "hates" constitutions like Italy's because they are bastions of national sovereignty, as against the unfettered free market (Fusaro 2018a). Citing the 2012 constitutional reform—whereby the budget-balancing mandated by the Maastricht Treaty was directly integrated into the Italian Constitution—Fusaro portrayed a "financial aristocracy" and banking "globocrats" waging war on national sovereignty and democracy itself. Further invoking the "new world order" and "single way of thinking" imposed since the fall of the Eastern Bloc, Fusaro portrays a world in which all leaders who resist the demands of JP Morgan and Goldman Sachs are the victims of "colour revolutions" (Fusaro 2018b). This is allied to the war against the cultural fabric of Italy waged by these same elites, for instance the "gender totalitarianism" of "forcing children to write gay love letters," or the bid to "Third-World-ize" Europe through mass immigration (Fusaro 2018c, 2019).[2] The battle is thus displaced from the ground of economics proper to a cultural terrain in which the constitution is recast as a generic banner of Italian nationhood.

A Cordon Sanitaire?

In *Il Primato Nazionale*'s hosting of non-member Fusaro, as in interventions by CasaPound's own militants, we see a curious interplay between neofascism's purportedly antisystemic character (opposed to the European Union and neoliberal capitalism), its claim to a nonparty, institutional tradition (the defense of the Italian Constitution), and its attempt to occupy a terrain once identified with the Left. In a further gesture towards its own "transversal" character, the February 2018 editorial cited above denied that the Left had any right to claim the constitution's values as its own: indeed, it cited constitutional Sub-Commission President Gustavo Ghidini to the effect that the economic articles of the constitution are not a "Socialist-Communist" project. The date of these comments

[2] Notable in this latter piece is praise for Marco Rizzo, leader of a small and hardline-Stalinist Partito Comunista, as the only left-wing leader to recognise the dangers of immigration.

goes unmentioned, as does the direct motivation for Ghidini's claims—in February 1947, three months before this intervention, he had joined a soft-left, anticommunist split from the Socialists known as the Partito Socialista dei Lavoratori Italiani (PSLI). Yet in the pages of *Il Primato Nazionale*, such a citation has the effect not simply of denying the Left's claim over the constitution—for instance, by also citing the role of the PSLI or the Christian Democrats—but rather of portraying it as above all political divides. Here we can draw parallels with former MSI cadre's Alemanno's recasting of the World War II resistance: forced to apologize after his 2008 election victory was greeted by fascist-saluting skinheads outside city hall, he visited Rome's synagogue to condemn the German occupation and insist Resistance values were the "property of all Italians" even as he condemned the crimes committed by "all sides" in the "civil war." The effect, in both cases, is to deny the Left's ownership of its totemic traditions while relativizing or even denying their specifically antifascist content.

The May 2019 affair over Altaforte's participation at the Turin book fair was a case in point. While left-wing publishers as well as commentators and activists in wider society insisted that the constitution did not guarantee "free speech" to fascists, CasaPound defended itself on precisely this terrain. Notable in this regard was an article for *Il Primato Nazionale* by one Adolfo Spezzaferro ("Adolf Iron-Smasher") whose title invoked the "ignorance" of whoever claimed "The Constitution is Anti-Fascist" (Spezzaferro 2019). When left-wing writer Christian Raimo sought to organize opposition to Altaforte's presence at the Salone del Libro, the CasaPound journal replied: "In truth the response to all the doubts now gripping Raimo's followers is in a book – the constitution itself, that is. So good reading to all" (Spezzaferro 2019). Perhaps Spezzaferro did not make it to the end of this "book," the twelfth of whose *Disposizioni transitorie e finali* expressly forbids "the reorganization in any form of the dissolved fascist party"—a principle complemented by the 1952 Scelba Law, criminalizing any public "exaltation of fascism's exponents, principles, deeds, or methods." Yet while the constitution recognises no *unlimited* right to free expression and association, fascist parties have long avoided any penal sanctions, it still today being left up to private platforms like Facebook to choose whether to silence them.

In this sense, it is also worth putting the advance of postfascist and neofascist forces in a broader historical context. The so-called *cordon sanitaire* against fascists in the post-World War II era, banning them from any

return to national government, relied not simply on the constitutional provisions against the "reorganization" of the fascist party but, rather, on the constant vigilance and organized presence of mostly left-wing and labor-movement forces, determined to bar Mussolini-nostalgics from public life. Instructive in this regard was the affair surrounding Fernando Tambroni's short-lived government in 1960, which relied on the MSI for its majority in parliament, if not integrating any neofascist ministers. This arrangement—together with provocative plans to hold the MSI congress in antifascist Genoa, with the rumoured participation of the Salò-era police chief—sparked rioting in the north-western port city, which was then echoed in clashes around Italy in which a total of 11 protestors were killed. It was, in truth, this moment that killed off plans for rehabilitating a "mainstreamed," "conservative" MSI, after which point it would take until the end of the "First Republic" in 1992–1994—and the dissolution of the Communist, Socialist, and Christian-Democratic Parties—before historic MSI leaders like Alemanno and Fini could guide their Alleanza Nazionale into cooperation with Berlusconi, and a first chance in national government.

CasaPound is not itself anything like a potential force of government, or even as a minor ally for other hard- and far-right forces: in June 2019, it announced that it was abandoning its participation in elections, marking its failure to present a meaningful alternative to either the (non-fascist) Lega or Fratelli d'Italia, a more effective force in gathering postfascist identitarian support (and by spring 2020 polling as high as 14% of the vote). Yet even the militant and openly Mussolinian CasaPound, known for its thuggish behaviour (towards journalists and not only its main target, immigrants), has achieved a measure of "respectability" in political debate as other forces loosen their historic rejection of debate with fascists. This most obviously owes to the mainstreaming of previous fascists who maintained their ties to more militant circles, for instance 2008–2013 Rome Mayor Gianni Alemanno, who even proposed to buy out the social center occupied by CasaPound using city funds. But the opening to the neofascists goes much wider—for instance, in July 2016 the mayor of Bolzano, the Democratic Party's Renzo Caramaschi (Berizzi 2016), drew the ire of ANPI when he sought a pact with CasaPound councillors, an alliance also realized in the student elections in Frosinone that

December (Senza Tregua 2016). These incidents, but moreover the general acceptance of CasaPound as a legitimate participant in public debate, have served to relativize its fascist ideas.[3]

Far further along this road is Fratelli d'Italia, a party with the MSI symbol in its logo, former ministers in its ranks, and a close alliance with the Lega, as Berlusconi becomes less central to the overall Italian political chessboard. In an era of extreme political volatility—and opportunism—it has become an established part of the parliamentary mainstream, with sitting Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte (by now heading an M5s-Democratic coalition) attending its Atreju summer school in September 2019 (Colli 2019). Conte had earlier made a positive impression at an analogous event hosted by Articolo Uno, presenting himself as a man of the Left: himself attending Atreju, Salvini mused that Conte ought to tell the Fratelli d'Italia faithful that he was "a right-winger with a fascist granddad" (Guerzoni 2019). Yet the highlight of the postfascist meetup was not the appearance of the Italian prime minister, but rather his Hungarian counterpart, Viktor Orbán. After the far-right authoritarian told the crowd of his work in defending Christian Europe from Islam, the assembled militants began to sing a historic neofascist anthem, "Avanti Ragazzi di Buda." Relating the tale of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, the song narrates the tale of the popular uprising crushed by Soviet tanks, ending with the lament "students, farmworkers, peasants—the sun no longer rises in the East."

Across Europe, the forces represented by Orbán are today making headway, with forces of a type with Fratelli d'Italia everywhere more and more legitimized. This does, indeed, include a discrete battle over historical memory itself, prolonging that battle fought in the Italy of the 1990s and 2000s. The heirs to fascism assert their republican-democratic mores whereas the history of the Communist Party is either demonized (with its partisan struggle portrayed as a violent sectarian movement and prelude to a Stalinist coup) or else stripped from it (with the constitution recast as a simply "national" heritage no longer to be ascribed to the parties that actually wrote it). This rewriting of history reached its pinnacle in the European Parliament vote just two days before Orbán's appearance at Atreju, where parliamentarians from across the political spectrum—including even former Italian Communist MPs—voted to condemn all

[3] For a collection of sources on relations between PD officials and CasaPound, see Wu Ming (2017).

"totalitarianisms" as the same (Castellina 2019), and put communism on the same footing as Nazism. For those who promote the "fascism of the third millennium," such a decision only brings a fresh round of legitimation, erasing whatever remains of the antifascist consensus won after World War II. Italy is still today far from the conditions of the 1930s. But what the far right wins, with each fresh bid to appropriate and recast historical memory, is the rollback of the victories the Left thought it had won in the 1940s.

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Fig. 16.1 Front cover of *The Masses, a Monthly Magazine Devoted to the Interests of the Working People* (1917)

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CHAPTER 16

Radical America: The 1930s and the Politics of Storytelling

Kristin Lawler

Remembering, Repeating, Working Through

American decades are stories; each is recognizable by the images, themes, and central characters that define it in the popular imagination. Less consensus exists on the moral of the story of any given decade. Especially for periods exceptionally rich in crisis and transformation, later generations fight to define the salient historical lessons. The moral of the story of the American sixties, for instance, remains unresolved, living on in battles over race and class and the politics of cultural liberation. In the context of today's impending global crisis and rising fascist tide, the 1930s story has supplanted the 60s as the relevant one to be retold, to be mined for a past we can use (Fig. 16.1).

What lesson animates today's popular retelling of the story of the 1930s? Optimism about a resurgent radicalism in the face of widespread inequality, austerity, downward mobility, and ecological and economic

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_16

crisis is certainly one of the main drivers. "The thirties," in the left imagination especially, means working-class anticapitalist rebellion. From this perspective, every sign of capitalist crisis and unsustainability is greeted with a fair measure of enthusiasm, on the idea that the more extreme and radical capital becomes, the more radical the population becomes and the closer the revolution draws.

In the United States, of course, economic crisis and rebellion did not bring revolution but instead bought a few decades of domesticating prosperity, in which the American working class was bought off with high wages, gadgets, and public goods, in exchange for high levels of productivity and support for neo-imperialist foreign and economic policy. But by the early 1970s, it was clear to elites that the working class had reneged on the deal, and a new era of "crisis" was ushered into quash the multifaceted rebellion for which "the sixties" serves as shorthand. At long last, today's working class is regaining strength after absorbing decades of body blows. Comparisons between today's rising strike and social democratic waves in the face of the accelerating imposition of capitalist crisis, and the militant 1930s is, then, only natural and for many a source of if not exactly hope, at least some measure of excitement.

For example, the major publication of the young democratic socialist left, *Jacobin*, in September 2019 used the 1930s analogy to argue that only the multiethnic, multiracial, militant working-class politics of the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign can win real gains and to argue against what they see as primary opponent Elizabeth Warren's 1990s-era elite technocratic, ameliorative policy plans. Under a section entitled, "Back When We Won Something," the *Jacobin* editors make the thirties story current: "In the early 1930s, American workers faced a similarly hopeless situation: the economy had collapsed, the government was hardly willing to do a thing to help, and the Supreme Court was controlled by a reactionary, Gilded-Age Republican Party … But what both the court and the new administration faced was an increasingly insurgent working-class radicalism. The result of this power play by workers — angry, antagonistic, and increasingly organized — and their relationship with the Democratic Party of the time was the New Deal. Even the reactionary court, which struck down much of it at first as unconstitutional, couldn't stamp this tide — not this time." The authors admit that the recent upsurge in labor militancy, while exciting, is a faint echo of the

tidal waves of mass action of the 1930s. Still, they argue that the similarities between the two periods mean contemporary struggles could reap a similar resolution.

Other analogies serve more as a warning than battle cry: the ominous signs of a neofascist authoritarian populism rising around the world inform some of the most prominent of the comparisons between the 1930s and today. Yale Philosophy Professor Jason Stanley wrote "How Fascism Works" in 2018 and his *NYT* opinion piece, "If you are not scared about fascism in the US, you should be: when fascism starts to feel normal, we're all in trouble," outlines the formula that fascists use to take over. He demonstrates how the Trump administration, as well as that of Bolsonaro in Brazil, Orbán in Hungary, and Erdoğan in Turkey, among others, is following an old-timey script step by terrifying step.

The moral of the story he tells of the 1930s: Be afraid. Don't assume "*It Can't Happen Here*," the title of the 1935 Sinclair Lewis novel in which a right-populist Hitler-type character wins the American presidency, a novel which sold out on Amazon the day after Donald Trump's election. Much of the popular comparison between the 1930s and today is then, understandably, animated by such fears, and by the vague hope that today's American story ends with a resolution similar to that which overcame both fascism and the Great Depression.

But in fact, an exclusionary logic had made the "resolution" unsustainable. The New Deal was not extended to single women, Black Americans, or to "aliens"; neither were the post-World War II government programs like Federal housing loans and GI (veterans') education benefits that set up the descendants of second wave immigrants as "white" and "middle class," and that ushered in a brief period of ostensible cultural and economic stability still idealized as "The American Dream." The cultural politics of work, race, patriarchal family, and nation that this dream state attempted to close off rumbled under the surface throughout what Stanley Aronowitz has called "The Unsilent Fifties" and surfaced in what we might call the "long 1960s"—the culture wars that have continued to rage ever since.

Psychoanalysis tells us that we repeat stories of moments that remain unresolved. We hope for a narrative mastery that we didn't possess in the moment we are re-presenting (often a traumatic one); in attempting narrative resolution to moments of crisis, contention, and split, we often disavow whatever threatens narrative closure. But the disruptive elements that undermine this closure, our will to mastery of the past, tend to make

their way into the stories anyway. The dynamics of storytelling complicate our interpretation of the past and our perception of the resonances between a decade like the 1930s and our own time. The American story told in the 1930s contains important lessons for antifascist and anticapitalist politics today, but, I contend, only if we remain in the unresolved moments of the story, before a domesticating, disciplined resolution was imposed on the dynamic tensions of art and politics, of cultural freedom and class struggle militancy.

Telling an American Story

The 1930s we find when we return to that era is largely a story of America told by members of what Michael Denning calls "The Cultural Front": artists, writers, and musicians associated with the Popular Front social movement. The enduring power of this Popular Front narrative makes plain the power of storytelling, of a cultural intervention in an era in which political art and cultural politics have been largely abandoned by a resurgent left, many of whose members see the appropriation of the politics of freedom by the hard right as reason enough to disavow them. A return to the 1930s in the left imagination is a chance to correct that kind of rigid thinking about class and culture, a position that is actually reactionary from the perspective of the deeply utopian cultural politics of the 1960s.

In particular, the cultural politics of the Popular Front were antifascist, as was the story its writers told of what America was and what it could be. We may be returning to the 1930s today because we left something there: a story of an open American identity with which to oppose the closed, exclusionary nationalism of today's neofascist right.

Haunting today's politics is a question: what is a nation without its borders and its rules for who belongs and who does not? Can America remain a "nation of immigrants" when climate disaster and brutal violence puts millions of people around the world on the move? Even lefties like Bernie Sanders, vocally against the concentration camps, family separations, immigration bans on Muslim and "shithole" countries, ICE raids and deportations—all the most brutal excesses of a neofascist white nationalism—don't come out for full open borders because it's totally unclear what that would mean, particularly for the kind of European-style social democratic politics that rely on a notion of entitlement by

citizenship and that characterize the part of the left that is making gains today.

For Edward Said, real liberation necessitates a consciousness that does not reject but goes beyond national consciousness, and the deployment of myth and story is crucial to this process. In *Yeats and Decolonization*, he argues that Yeats deployed a mythical Celtic imaginary to create a usable past for Irish anti-British nationalism. Although Yeats's ambivalence held back his own broader anti-imperialist potential and did not allow him to go beyond a national liberation identity in which opposing classes are narratively unified in an "imagined" nation, the Celtic imaginary he invoked was a story that, because it allowed the Irish to identify with a mythic and primitive communist culture, pointed the way beyond essentialist identities and toward a universal liberation. This is not surprising: no one can see the universal truth that "property is theft" more clearly than can the colonized.[1] Still, struggles based on identifications with an oppressed nation inevitably fuse opposed classes and any new nation becomes one in which the oppressive class relationships remain, just masked.

Thus, the category of the nation forms an incomplete but still significant step toward universal liberation. Popular Front writers told an American story that embraced a mythical folk past and the identity of oppressed nationalities in order to transcend those identities and forge a future liberation. Imperfect and contested as it was, it points to the possibility of reclaiming the idea of America from today's flag-waving xenophobic neofascist as well as the class exploiters for whom they serve as Praetorian Guard.

The National-Popular

This Popular Front story of America and its "people" is ripe with political possibility: an integrated America not bound by strict lines of racial identity, a migrant America in which movement was defined not as marginal or deviant but as central to the experience of the American worker, an America in which the industrial working class was a central historical actor. For Denning, the left's turn toward populism in the CP's post-1934 Popular

[1] Marx made this clear in both his critique of bourgeois national identity and later in his support for the Irish liberation struggle and the belief that it was the key to the liberation of the English working class as well—since England's divide and conquer racial politics were antithetical to the English worker's struggle.

Front period "was less a retreat from radicalism [as a very common left critique would have it] than an emblem of the shift from an embattled subculture to a significant mass social movement. Moreover, the 'people' invoked by the left wing popular front were … working men and women of many races and nationalities" (Denning 1998, 127).

The story invoked a horizontal and fluid national identity, a "nation of nations" model that resonated with an internationalist antifascism. According to Denning, "the notion of a working-class federation of nationalities was a vital part of American Communist theory and practice, the other side of its revolutionary industrial unionism." Ethnic nationalism, like all singular identifications, was something to be both celebrated and transcended: "'Negro writers,' Richard Wright argued, 'must accept the nationalist implications of their lives, not in order to encourage them, but in order to change and transcend them. They must accept the concept of nationalism because, in order to transcend it, they must *possess* and *understand* it.'" For Denning, "both the Americanism and the nationalism of the Popular Front was inflected with a popular *internationalism*" (1998, 130–131).

Denning describes the Popular Front story of America as a "paradoxical synthesis of competing nationalisms and internationalism – pride in ethnic heritage and identity combined with an assertive Americanism and a popular internationalism – which dominated much of the culture of those Louis Adamic called the 'new Americans.' This 'pan-ethnic Americanism' is perhaps the most powerful working-class ideology of the age of the CIO, and it significantly reshaped the contours of official US nationalism" (Denning 1998, 130).

Popular Front storytellers consciously broadcast a counternarrative to the fascist story that was on the rise in the United States, against the America envisioned by the Ku Klux Klan, nativist vigilante organizations, racist radio star Father Charles Coughlin, and others. The cultural front emerged victorious: what Denning calls "the laboring of American culture" has endured.

This left counternarrative explicitly looked to generate a new national-popular culture, as Stanley Aronowitz points out in his 1993 essay, "Cultural Politics of the Popular Front," both a remembrance and a political analysis of the CP during that period. Although the American Communists had not read Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, in which he laid out the concept of the "National-Popular" (texts which only became available after the war), their US strategy after 1935 was nevertheless "among its

most articulated elaborations." The party aimed to "found an alternative to nativist patriotism by reconstructing the national culture as a popular culture that could be articulated with the economic and political struggles of subaltern groups." In this, their work was of a piece with Gramsci's idea that the struggle for hegemony "required the party to appropriate the history of what he called the 'national-popular collective will' in all its aspects …"[2]

Aronowitz sees Gramsci's theory of hegemony as very explicitly "not a bow to nationalism" and in fact a locus of opposition to its most dangerous forms. Gramsci's whole theory of the possibility for social transformation "depends on the success of the project of linking economic reform to moral and intellectual reform through the mediation of intellectuals … without the latter, fascist and other authoritarian solutions to the capitalist crisis are more likely to the extent that the right successfully captures the moral high ground, while the left wallows in its economism" (Aronowitz 1993, 134–136).

A key example of this antifascist national-popular is 1939s iconic *Ballad for Americans*, sung most famously by Paul Robeson, which, according to Denning, enacts a "continual deferral and refusal of a single identification." It is an America without a stable, fixed identity. "Who are you? I'm the everybody who's nobody, I'm the nobody who's everybody" is answered with a series of jobs, followed by a series of races and ethnicities. This is a proud, joyous appropriation of American mythology and crafting of an open American character that every worker is invited to identify with and to celebrate.

The refusal of an exclusionary identification remains central to real class liberation; pure and simple labor movement politics are simply not enough when it comes to a rising racist tide. Without a cultural politics of freedom, openness, and a libidinal challenge to the aggression that fuels closed nationalist authoritarianism, working-class politics can go either way—left or right. As a prominent example, Donald Trump won

[2] Paul Gilroy, Aronowitz notes, points out rightly that this national-popular strategy can "slip into nationalism." In the case of the CP, it too often did, such that the party stopped criticizing the Roosevelt administration at all in favor of giving "critical support" to the New Deal. This shows the danger of moving from a national liberation consciousness to a populist one. Another is that it involved partiality to the CIO leadership now responsible for disciplining rank and file rebellion; this move arguably set up the left to be purged from the unions later because they'd lost their rank and file base of support.

the Presidency at least in part by appealing to putatively working-class issues around tightening the labor market.

Protectionist, nationalist labor politics are the nation-state's equivalent of a closed shop, a labor movement strategy to control the supply of labor to the market through exclusion. This strategy keeps wages high by keeping labor scarce, either by maintaining a scarcity of skill or in some other way, often just union membership. Labor scarcity and high wages achieved through the exclusionary control of skill was the essence of the old AFL craft union strategy. The industrial unionism of the CIO period—prefigured by the late nineteenth century Knights of Labor, the turn of the century Western Federation of Miners, and their legendary progeny, the early twentieth century Industrial Workers of the World or IWW—operates on a fundamentally different logic.

The CIO and its forebears organized wall to wall, black and white, and were made largely of immigrants. Its predecessors—the Knights, Western Federation of Labor, and the IWW—refused even to sign contracts with the employer. Contracts necessitate identifications; to sign your name is to identify yourself as a party responsible for what you are promising to do and not to do. A labor movement without contracts, that makes provisional deals based on moment-to-moment power relations, is the antithesis of a closed, exclusionary logic of identity. It depends for its power on inclusive, horizontal mass action rather than a determination of who is "in" and who is "out."

The key to gaining leverage without ugly and ultimately unsustainable exclusions is the old IWW tactic of sabotage, or what IWW leader, later turned CP member, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn called "the conscious withdrawal of the workers' efficiency." Slowing down, or "striking on the job," is a way to make labor scarce relative to employer demand without the use of borders or exclusions of any kind. Striking on the job, in fact, is the animating force of the sit-down strategy central to the labor victories that ushered in the heyday of CIO industrial unionism. And just as the Protestant work ethic drives the logic of capitalist exploitation, an antiwork culture fuels the strategy of industrial unionism, because it involves the collective withholding of labor to the employer by the workers as a group. In other words, where the Protestant work ethic informs the exploitation of workers, the refusal of work discipline fuels worker power. Class struggle is thus always a cultural question. This is precisely why it is so important that the American mythology resurrected by the

writers of the Popular Front was so frequently a story of the wild, militant, freedom-loving, enduringly romanticized hobo saboteurs of the IWW.

Footloose Rebels

Many 1930s left writers may have been too serious to appreciate either the radical cultural politics of the hobo or the way their irreverent libertarianism fueled the tactic of sabotage or striking on the job so central to the development of the sit-down strike and of all industrial unionism. Still, in working to create an antiracist, antifascist culture that was resonant with industrial unionism, the CP and fellow travelers retold the stories of what is arguably American culture's most iconic countercultural and militant worker, the hobo "Wobbly" (as IWW supporters were known). The centrality of the hobo migrant worker in Popular Front culture demonstrates the extent to which the IWW influenced the CIO period, both its labor strategy and its cultural strategy. In fact, Wobblies and hoboes were explicitly tapped by Popular Front writers and artists as raw material for the creation of a national-popular culture.

Thirties writers told hobo stories for reasons both historical and ideological. The 1930s saw a flood of homelessness and migration that dwarfed the hobo populations of the two decades previous as well as the "tramp scare" of the late nineteenth century, so 1930s authors who wanted to tell the story of American workers on the move found themselves having to deal with an American migrant worker who already existed in the popular imagination. And the myth served those Popular Front writers and artists who looked to craft an antifascist American story. In telling the story, communist writers and fellow travelers disavowed precisely the cultural politics of "hobohemia" that make the hobo such an enduringly romantic and inspirational radical character in the American story. Still, other Popular Front figures like Woody Guthrie kept the hobo character alive, to be taken up by an anti-Stalinist, libertarian, countercultural postwar generation; the *On The Road* beat literary movement and the music of Bob Dylan saw in the hobo story the libertarian working-class politics that a Stalinist left felt compelled to disavow.

This Land Is Your Land

Woody Guthrie was probably the most enduring cultural figure of the Popular Front. Aronowitz's remembrance of the hootenannies of the 1940s, reminiscent of Wobbly "hobohemian" gatherings, is illustrative of why: Aronowitz himself was a member of a generation that bridged the Old Left and the New Left, and he cites the cultural interventions of the CP milieu in which he came of age as informing his political sensibilities as the sixties emerged.

> Sponsored by *People's Artists,* an organization of left-wing folk musicians that included Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie among others, these events brought thousands of radical kids of my generation to what had been forgotten or, in some cases, suppressed traditions of protest, labor, African-American, and rural American music. … equally important they provided a stage for some artists who were later to find space in mainstream popular music (1993, 153–154).

Migration narratives were central to this tradition, and they remained part of the American story long after the art that had elevated them to such cultural prominence was dismissed as Stalinist and thus worthless. The music of Woody Guthrie was an iconic example of the way this kind of narrative both shaped an antifascist American identity and remained central to American culture throughout the twentieth century. In *Pastures of Plenty*, Woody and the landscape that surrounds him both ramble: *It's always we've rambled, that river and I …*

And famously the last stanzas of Guthrie's interpretation of Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, "The Ballad of Tom Joad," trace Tom's transition from oppressed worker to proletarian fighter and make heroic the dissolution of an identity based on family, place, land, and work. In a crescendo that reverberates through Dylan and Springsteen and Rage Against the Machine, Tom leaves the family to merge with the working class everywhere, because "everybody might be just one big soul":

> Ever'body might be just one big soul,
> Well it looks that a-way to me.
> Everywhere that you look, in the day or night,
> That's where I'm a-gonna be, Ma,
> That's where I'm a-gonna be

Tom will be "everywhere that you look, Ma" and "wherever men are fightin' for their rights." This is an iconic American working-class character who is valorized precisely because his place is everywhere.

Guthrie's memoir, *Bound for Glory,* is explicitly crafted as an antiracist hobo story. According to Todd Depastino:

> while *Bound for Glory* posits the rough and unstable camaraderie of the boxcar as a microcosm of the American working class, it emphatically insists on a racially inclusive vision of 'the people.' Indeed, the book's opening sentence redefines the road as a multiracial domain: 'I could see men of all colors bouncing along in the boxcar.' His description of the men 'piled around on each other' amounts to a catalog of occupations, ethnicities, nationalities, and races, each in tension with one another but subjected to the same conditions. With 'race pushing against race' on the crowded train, Guthrie emphasizes the common battle 'against the wind and rain,' metaphors for the depression and fascism, that ultimately must draw the men together. The coupling of Guthrie and his black traveling companion provides a model for such interracial solidarity (Depastino 2003, 214).

But it's not just the way that Popular Front figures like Guthrie told the story of the hobo that turned the rail-riding "footloose rebel" into an icon of a racially open American identity. The figure of the vagrant has in fact always connoted a refutation of the blood and soil nationalism that is the inevitable extension of a logic that ties work to identity and identity to place.

Identity, Place, Work

Hobo stories told during the 1930s challenged the discipline of work, often in spite of their own political motives, by telling stories of migration that disrupt a rigid sense of place-based identity. Popular Front writers did not intend to challenge the work ethic, but in telling an American folk story that posed a counternarrative to racism and fascism, they kept the hobo alive and well in American popular culture. They may not have agreed that the anarcho-syndicalist refusal of work is the most important countervailing force to fascism, a libidinal pleasure strong enough to counter the aggressions of authoritarianism, but Wobbly and migrant stories sent the message anyway. Stories that valorize movement are steeped in the refusal of work discipline. Employers and the state have always understood this.

Hobo stories were also told by early twentieth century sociologists, many of them funded by state agencies interested in domestication of the "anomic" hobo lifestyle, who were concerned about the "social problem" of the homeless (called in one classic study, "*The Feebly Inhibited*"). "Railroad bulls," police, and ultimately, the federal government, opposed migrant hobo workers at every turn. Why would employers and the repressive and ideological state apparatuses that serve them, find the movement of a low-wage migratory labor force a threat rather than a convenience?

Mobility is a form of working-class leverage. Stuck in one place, workers tend to be at the mercy of the supply of and demand for labor: if there are few jobs and many workers, wages fall. If there are many jobs and just a few workers, wages rise and so does the power of workers to make other demands on the employer. Workers' mobility is a serious "social problem" for capital's ability to exploit them because it aids their refusal of the terms of their exploitation. So does sabotage, otherwise known as a slowdown. When workers work more slowly, the job lasts longer and more workers are employed, thus tightening the labor market. In the words of a popular IWW poster: "Slow Down. The Job You Save May Be Your Own."

What Matthew May calls "the hobo orator union" broadcast the idea in every town and city they worked in, often from soapboxes on urban "main stems" and in parks like Chicago's "Bughouse Square," where members of the Dill Pickle Club and the Hobo College read Nietzsche, made art, gave and listened to political stand-up, and talked sabotage and revolution. The principle of movement and leverage operated in the hobo's use of mobility to fight for their political and cultural spaces. Whenever the local police tried to shut down the soapbox speakers on main stems in towns and cities all over the West, the call would go out in the IWW papers—"calling all footloose rebels!" En masse, hoboes jumped onto trains headed to Fresno, San Diego, Everett, Washington, and other places, ready to fill the jails and thwart the local police's efforts to clear urban space of hobo political subjectivity.

Since the dawn of capitalism and the enclosure of the village common lands that made what Marx called primitive accumulation possible, in every place and every time, when unemployment rises high enough to provoke workers to leave a local labor market in search of better pastures, "vagrancy" laws are put on the books and enforced, brutally if necessary. This was certainly true of the early twentieth-century hoboes, who had constantly to fight being tossed off trains and police breaking up their

encampments and their ability to get on the soapbox and give speeches on the subjects of sabotage and class struggle. In a very common example, during one of the free speech fights in San Diego local authorities made an ordinance that said that any vagrant who was offered work and refused would be promptly jailed.

The threat posed to capital by a mobile workforce went way back. In the United States after the civil war, vagrancy laws came on the books in both the north and the south as a way to craft and enforce a new regime of wage labor by Black Americans and European immigrants and their descendants.[3] The problem was "moral" as well: Protestant reformers and philanthropists like the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor and the Charity Organization Society, worked to put an end to the "reckless generosity" which served as "stimulants to vagrancy."

The moralism of the work/place/identity axis has a history as long as that of (always racialized) capitalist exploitation. The legal concept of vagabondage originated in England, "in the longstanding distinction between able-bodied and non-able-bodied poor. As early as the fourteenth century, parliament had made it an offence to have no master (and thus no 'place')" (Cresswell 2013, 50). Labor shortages, as in the wake of the Black Plague, ramped up elite fear of "a generalized form of disorder which threatened the ruling elites": that is, workers' leverage. Vagrancy and its Other is, then, about both work and place; both are key to identity and morality in capitalist society.

[3] According to Depastino's *Citizen Hobo*, in the south, "agricultural employers struggled to reestablish a plantation labor force out of newly emancipated slaves who overwhelmingly desired to live on small plots of their own outside the plantation system … vagrancy legislation played a crucial role in the conversion of the south to free labor by serving as a coercive stick to balance the carrot of market choice. African Americans in the South possessed a margin of freedom to choose certain terms of employment. But no propertyless person was free *not* to sign a labor contract." In the north, "the rise of the tramp army … redirected the debate over labor compulsion toward white, especially Irish, industrial workers. These workers, employers and legislators feared, seemed as indolent and determined to flout the wage system as their Black counterparts in the South. By raising the specter of the 'professional tramp' who was, as one state legislative committee put it, 'bound to live without work,' the tramp crisis conjured fears that the civil war's 'new birth of freedom' had shaded into an anarchic rebellion against wage labor." Vagrancy laws were instituted to close off "whatever stopping-off points remained on the road to a universal wage system."

They may have disavowed the most anarchist aspects of the migration stories they told, but in making migrants and hoboes central characters in the American story, 1930s writers valorized a deeply countercultural character. The hobo character, whose "Weary Willie" image by the late 1920s had replaced earlier celebratory depictions and was as beaten down as postwar repression had made the IWW, came roaring back into the American story after 1930.

Masses Old and New

Both Jack Conroy's *The Disinherited*, published in 1933, and the first novel of John Dos Passos's *USA* trilogy, *The 42nd Parallel*, published in 1930, center the single Irish-American male hobo of the 1920s and thus tell stories of open identity and an antiwork politics, even despite the restrictions of the literary left of the 1930s. Both books are considered Popular Front classics, and both books were taken to task by party critics for precisely what makes them enduringly great novels: their insufficiently formulaic nature. Conroy's work got bad reviews right away; Dos Passos later, when antifascist struggles in Spain and on the New York City left led him to leave the CPUSA orbit.

Both writers, too, were associated with what was perhaps the most important literary periodical of the Popular Front era: Mike Gold's *New Masses*. The *New Masses* was founded in 1926 as a successor to *The Masses* (1911–1917), a publication that had brought together Greenwich Village bohemian modernism in art and literature with the radical industrial unionist politics of the anarcho-syndicalist IWW variety, but that was shut down in the wave of repression that accompanied the United States entry into WWI. Once Mike Gold, proletarian novelist and CP leader, became head editor in 1928, he put out the call for proletarian writers, "worker-correspondents," explicitly calling for hobo and IWW stories (Denning 1998, 203–204).

But as the 1930s progressed, the *New Masses* became more and more devoted to a strict party line. The modernism and experimental openness that had characterized *The Masses* got progressively closed out. Still, migration remained central to the American whose story the Popular Front wanted to tell, so the hobo remained a central character, and Dos Passos and Conroy's novels of the single worker on the road are still considered classics of the cultural front. Neither novel glorifies the so-called dignity of work, either: The reader of *The Disinherited* feels the grim wet

terror of coal mining; *The 42nd Parallel* makes the emptiness of domesticated work and family, and the compulsion to move to escape it, palpable.

The Disinherited is far truer to the life of a migrant worker than are more rigid proletarian novels. The narrative is disjointed; plot strings go unresolved and unredeemed; characters come in and out of the story; and strikes are lost. Its narrative form is loose, permeable to difference, unplotted. It was criticized precisely because the narrative was insufficiently formulaic—it did not hew closely enough to the party line, according to party critics like Mike Gold, whose review of the book criticized its "lack of powerful dramatic form" and insufficiently "typical" characters—the "floating millions of migratories" are "social sports and eccentrics" (quoted in Denning 1998, 215).

The vérité anthropology of Conroy's text meant that, unlike in so many other works of proletarian "realism," the irreverent humor of hobo culture came through. As Wayne McGinnis points out, "a good bit of the flavor of *The Disinherited* is attributable to what [main character] Larry calls in the 'Hard Winter' section of the book 'the acidulous and pertinent wit of the down and out'" (Conroy 1982 [1933], 220, quoted in McGinnis 2013–2014, 4). This characterization was far truer to the often hilarious productions—song parodies, memoirs, comics, soapbox political stand-up comedy, columns in the IWW paper *Industrial Worker* like those of the brilliant hobo satirist T-Bone Slim—of hobo culture than were other 1930s-era stories.[4]

And from the story's start in the hellish Monkey Nest coal camp throughout Larry Donovan's life in the 1920s moving from job to job, industrial work is not portrayed according to a social realism that sees it as honorable, but as soul and body-deadening.

[4] Humor, in fact, was central to hobo life—often the "free speech" orators and singers were doing a form of political stand-up comedy or singing mocking parodies of Salvation Army and other songs that glorified labor and nationalism. Mocking laughter was disruptive to the seriousness of work and strict identity. Guthrie's nods to humor notwithstanding, Popular Front producers disavowed the humor in the very stories and songs that had previously defined hobo life. The most iconic IWW hobo song is Harry MacClintock's "Hallelujah I'm a Bum," the lyrics of which mock work and celebrate idleness and handouts; another is "The Big Rock Candy Mountain" where absurdist images depict pleasures abundant and free and where "they shot the jerk who invented work." Both songs are a long way from the grim 1930s "Brother Can You Spare a Dime."

Similarly, *The 42nd Parallel*, the first novel in Dos Passos's *USA* trilogy, tells a migrant story that is open—the main character finds himself more comfortable in Mexico than in suburban California—but without pleasure or power. Dos Passos ultimately sees the hobo as standing in for the defeat of the working class as a whole by the time *The Big Money*, the third installment, finishes. The main character, itinerant young worker Fenian McCreary, falls away from the narrative after the first novel and only returns at the very end of the third novel in the totally defeated form of "Vag," an old, beaten hobo who the new twentieth-century Fordist regime of mass production and mass consumer culture has literally left in the dust.

The radicalism of Dos Passos's storytelling lay in its modernist openness, in his refusal to take on an author's voice: there is no sovereign author but instead many perspectives, many stories. This is his method for getting the story of turn of the century America in all its many voices and inflections, and it is set off clearly from the rigid formulaic stories associated with proletarian realism. In its refusal of a single authorial identity, it enacts the fluid, open American identity that resonated with Dos Passos's profound antifascism.

The Popular Front got some important things right about the hobo story its writers told as emblematic of the thirties, especially the way he forms a living opposition to what Zygmunt Bauman has called "the moral geographies of roots and rootlessness," (quoted in Cresswell 2013, 17) a character who is valorized independent of place and, especially in Woody Guthrie's storytelling, of race. And Conroy and Dos Passos, especially, more than other figures on the thirties literary left, brought to life the antiwork and antidomesticity sensibilities of early twentieth-century migrant workers and the IWW. Guthrie and Conroy captured some of the antiauthoritarian libidinal politics of humor and life that characterized "hobohemia"—but only some. And as a whole, Popular Front artists and writers disavowed much of the refusal of work discipline and domesticity that more than anything, I argue, characterizes the figure of the American hobo.

It is not a mystery why the Popular Front deployed the hobo story—millions in the thirties were on the move. And movement itself enacts a refusal of the link between territory and identity, and between identity and work. The hobo was an icon of the story the Popular Front wanted to tell

about the American worker—militant on the job, antifascist in identity. Still, why did so many Popular Front writers narratively stifle the most important countercultural characteristics of those who sang unabashedly, *Hallelujah I'm a Bum*?

These parts were the ones deemed central by the earlier *The Masses* and the spaces around it, including Mabel Dodge's storied Greenwich Village salon, spaces in which IWW anarcho-syndicalist hobo politics of sabotage flowed into the radical cultural freedom of the moderns. For them, art was the opposite of capitalist work discipline so it rhymed with the worker's freedom from work. These were not the parts of the hobo story that the CP writers embraced. Carey McWilliams, for example, in his 1930 classic *Factories in the Fields,* explicitly challenged the discourse of radical freedom and rejection of wage work through which the IWW and their bohemian intellectual comrades had coded the hobo worker. For McWilliams, the discourse of choice can mask exploitation—why pay carefree footloose rebels much?—for instance. But this argument is weak—employers don't pay low wages based on their perception of worker need. The fact remains that the refusal of work and identity is central to the hobo story even if the CP only picked up parts of it and insisted on seeing migrants not as autonomous subjects on the move, but as passive subjects of the whims of the capitalist labor market.

The rebellious libertarian individualism of the hoboes and their deeply antiwork culture interrupted the narrative anyway and seeped into American culture in the shape of the *On the Road/On the Bus* beat-hippie counterculture, inspired by Woody via Bob Dylan but in many ways explicitly hostile to the perceived authoritarianism and closed narratives of the old left. Most Popular Front creators were not working to craft an image of the migrant worker as a collective agent seeking higher wages through anarcho-syndicalist techniques like sabotage and exit—most instead looked to tell a story about the "dignity of work" through a social realist glorification of the worker. But in deploying an American hobo myth to valorize an American working-class identity not tied to place in the manner of the blood and soil fascism, writers in the 1930s brought the hobo's class struggle cultural radicalism into the American story anyway.

Radical America

Hobo politics, broadcast during the Popular Front period, were later picked up by a New Left mounting a challenge to Stalinist old left orthodoxies. The new generation, influenced heavily by the counterculture of which the IWW and the Greenwich Village moderns who loved it were the forebears, saw the refusal of work in Wobbly culture more clearly than had the Popular Front storytellers. They looked back through "Brother Can You Spare a Dime" and saw "Hallelujah I'm a Bum" on the other side of it. These new leftists told their own stories of the IWW as the most militant, creative, and influential labor movement formation of the twentieth century, having shaped not only the tactics of the CIO period of sit-down strikes and industrial organization and the cultural front, but also the post-World War II beat-hippie youth counterculture, and thus their own brand of American radicalism.

Mike Davis, one of the editors of *Radical America*, the most prominent journal of the 1960s student left, published in 1975 what remains a gold standard in analyses of the IWW, "The Stopwatch and the Wooden Shoe." The essay lays out the way in which the IWW tactic of sabotage was rooted in a refusal of work discipline, opposing the Taylorist logic and Protestant work ethic morality central to industrial capitalism with a countercultural refusal of clock time and efficiency. In fact, the circle around *Radical America*, sharing a generational sensibility and a libertarian cultural politics with the beat-hippie counterculture, brought into the IWW hobo story the rebel culture that the Popular Front had worked so hard to leave out. Historian and surrealist poet Franklin Rosemont, chronicler of the IWW's "Revolutionary Working Class Counterculture" and another member of the editorial board of *Radical America*, understood about the Wobblies that they: "knew too much about work to be 'workerist.' Their constant emphasis on shortening the hours of labor, their defense of 'The Right to Be Lazy' (the title of a popular pamphlet by Marx's son-in-law, Paul Lafargue [published by the IWW]), and even their advocacy of 'sabotage' in the original sense of the word — signifying slowdowns on the job and other forms of workplace malingering — suffice to distinguish them from the middle-class Socialist and Communist intellectuals who so often glorified the misery known as work" (Rosemont 2003, 29).

Martha Sonnenberg's 1969 essay in *Radical America* entitled "Masses Old and New" is perhaps still the most important statement of how we might mine the story of the thirties for morals we can use today. Getting to the heart of what the proletarian seriousness of the Popular Front missed when it appropriated the radicalism of the generation that came before it, she cites the masthead of the original *Masses*:

> A revolutionary and not a reform magazine; a magazine with *a sense of humor* and no respect for the respectable; frank, arrogant, impertinent; searching for the true causes; a magazine directed *against rigidity and dogma* wherever it is found; printing what is too naked for a money making press; a magazine whose final policy is to conciliate nobody, not even its readers … (quoted in Sonnenberg, 69, italics mine)

As Sonnenberg points out, *The New Masses*, although explicitly modeled on the earlier publication and dedicated to the union of art and politics, and despite Gold's original desire to find the next Walt Whitman as well as his own bohemianism (which the Comintern was apparently somewhat suspicious of), eventually subordinated the freedom of art to the dogma of politics. Ultimately, it lost the very irreverent humor, narrative openness, and bohemian life-over-work ethos that was so central to the story of the American worker that it was looking to tell.

Still, Sonnenberg's essay lays out why the Popular Front project was relevant then and remains so now:

> In looking at the experience of *The Masses* and *The New Masses* we should try to avoid what [EP] Thompson calls "the enormous condescension of posterity." It is true that these artists were restricted by their own conceptions in their attempt to combine art and politics, and that those conceptions had dire consequences. Yet they aspired toward a worthy goal, and if they did not reach it, neither have we – in understanding the reasons for their failure perhaps we can gain insights for our own struggles (Sonnenberg, 74).

Some lessons from the 1930s are indelible: today, the left is in little danger of subordinating art, literature, or everyday life to a rigid narrative line. But a return to the 1930s as a metaphor for the possibility of a working-class resurgence means that we might avoid the other, equally dangerous pole: dismissing cultural politics as a whole. The 1960s left knew better. Stories told consciously during the 1930s have shaped

American working-class memory and identity in profound, and profoundly antifascist ways. When we return to the 1930s, we find cultural ammunition for the struggles we face—a notion of American identity resistant to capitalist exploitation and blood and soil nationalism—but only if we read the Popular Front stories to mine what they tap into, and what they attempted to disavow through a narrative closure that was clearly premature.

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PART IV

Body Politics/Political Bodies: Race, Gender, and the Human



Fig. 17.1 "With the cooperation of Japan, China, and Manchukuo the world can be at peace." The poster demonstrates several of the themes discussed in the following chapter by Alex Taek-Gwang Lee: Japan, Manchukuo, and Japanese-occupied China are represented as siblings, each identified by their respective flags (the latter two variants on the republican Chinese "five-races under one union flag"). Japan is the larger figure, occupying the center of the group, and is distinguished by gender from Manchukuo (to his right) and from both by his more western dress, invoking at once hierarchies of gender, family, and colonial modernity

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CHAPTER 17

The Specter of the 1930s in Asian Nation-Building: Global Fascism, Colonial Biopolitics, and the Origins of Modern Asia

Alex Taek-Gwang Lee

Not many know that the Korean national anthem was written and composed by collaborators of Japanese imperialism. It was most likely Yun Chi-ho, a politician and convert from nationalism to support of Japan, who wrote the poem on which the song was based. Ahn Eak-Tai, the earliest classical Korean composer and conductor, set the original lyrics to music; Ahn was also conductor at a ceremony celebrating the 10th anniversary of Manchukuo (滿州國), and at a concert in Berlin commemorating Hitler's birthday in 1941. While one might say that these are mere coincidences, I argue otherwise. Rather, these manifestations attest to the interconnection between colonial biopolitics, nation-state formation, and the global fascism that haunt the contemporary present (Fig. 17.1).

The Korean national anthem, which intrinsically symbolizes the birth of the nation, then, needs to be understood not as a product of an anticolonial act of resistance, pitting the colonized against the colonizer

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_17

in Manichean form; instead, the very notion of the origins of modern Asia needs to be placed within the broader context of the advent of modernity that places the Korean peninsula in the midst of modernization, colonialism, nation-state formation, and fascism. This is because even after decolonization, the Republic of Korea, a country being born with the end of the Second World War, is a nation-state strategically built in the south of the Korean peninsula against another Korea in the north. Today, South Korea is officially a party of the US-Korea-Japan alliance, even though the nation suffered a brutal and exploitative Japanese colonization. This irony is not accidental, considering historical interactions between modernization and colonialism; further, the implementation of fascism on a global scale alongside colonial biopolitics in the 1930s was necessary to developing the capitalist mode of production.

Fascism could be understood as "colonial sovereignty" in Achille Mbembe's terms. Mbembe (2001) argues that "colonial sovereignty" relies on three types of violence: First, the colonial sovereignty functions as founding violence, which plays an instituting role in bringing forth the space of its ruling; second, it is deployed to support a colonizer's legitimation; and third, it is designed to sustain colonial authority and reproduces it (25). These three forms of violence forge an iron web in the process of colonization, i.e., the violent extension of capitalist territories.

It must be emphasized that although fascism is associated with Italy, Germany, and Japan, as Michel Foucault (2003) reminds us, fascism was also part of the practice of colonialism. What is notable here is that the vector moves as a "boomerang effect": fascist practice in the colonized countries with its juridical and political systems returned to Europe and Japan, which were active in producing the forms of colonization. Michel Foucault points out:

> At the end of the sixteenth century we have, then, if not the first, at least an early example of the sort of boomerang effect colonial practice can have on the juridico-political structures of the West. It should never be forgotten that while colonization, with its techniques and its political and juridical weapons, obviously transported European models to other continents, it also had a considerable boomerang effect on the mechanisms of power in the West, and on the apparatuses, institutions, and techniques of power. A whole series of colonial models was brought back to the West, and the result was that the West could practice something resembling colonization, or an internal colonialism, on itself. (Foucault 2003, 103)

Colonization is the dialectical process between the colonizer and the colonized. As a colonialist, the colonizer has to legitimate its conquest (Memmi 1967, 89). Law is the guardian of colonization as well as of commodities. The colonization process is nothing less than the expansion of a capitalist market system to the colony in order to make a profit. Geographical differences are essential for the principle of profit maximization. For the colonizer, the colonized territory as such is the source of commodification, and the colonized people are simply the units of labor power. Everything in the colony must be reduced to capitalist values. Fascist violence is essential to put in place the solid foundation of the first structure of the colonial settlement. As Foucault illustrates, such an act of violent structuration turns out to be the model of new governmentality and flows back to the countries of the colonizers like a boomerang.

In this sense, fascism served as colonial biopolitics but is not limited to a historical specificity of Europe. The rise of fascism is related to European colonialism and its technology of governance. At the last stage of capitalism in Lenin's sense, imperialism came along with the expansion of social engineering in the colonial countries and forced colonized people to be "civilized"; colonialism dovetails with the economic development of capitalism, and as such, is an integral part of colonial biopolitics.

What has been less often commented upon is how fascism served as colonial biopolitics in non-Western experiences of capitalism in the 1930s, especially for those involved in the project of "nation-building." Asian fascism in those days thrived on chasing European capitalism and mobilized people to total war. Fascism was one of the powerful options for Asian reformists who strived to transform their countries. I will now discuss the dialectical interaction between fascism and colonial biopolitics in East Asia.

The Rise of Asian Fascism in the 1930s

Since the 1930s, East Asia was a locus of fascism as the premise for building a more perfect nation-state, playing a pivotal role in encouraging people to insist on their autonomy in competition with Europe. Manchukuo was an attempt to bring the utopian idea of fascism to reality, i.e., the total modernization of East Asia. In fact, the fascist experiences of the 1930s are still influential in the region and continue constituting the fantasy of an ideal nation-state. In this sense, fascism is not dead but still alive, continually incubating the rise of the alt-right as a subset of fascism against globalization. What is happening in India and the Philippines today would

be the typical examples. The popularity of Narendra Modi and Rodrigo Duterte proves the disturbing truth that authoritarian regimes are easily compatible with capitalism. The survival of fascism is not accidental, but necessary insofar as global capitalism goes hand in hand with colonial biopolitics, because it is the underlying logic of capitalism as such.

Manchukuo exemplifies fascism's growth within the mechanism of capitalism. It does not mean that capitalism as such *is* fascism, but that capitalism precipitates and incubates fascist moments. The expansion of capitalism, i.e., the exercise of imperialism, is to nullify the boundary of a nation-state and thus necessarily gives rise to a multinational situation. In this sense, imperialism is the extension of nationalism, while at the same time, the negation of it. Here, fascism is summoned to gain hegemony over the paradoxical situation of imperialism, which is the simultaneous extension and negation of nationalism. What explains this simultaneous extension and negation? This is because nationalism is an ideology that, as Benedict Anderson argues, invented an imaginary community as a political entity in which every member of a nation is regarded as an extension of a family. But capitalism continuously expands national boundaries for its commercial interests, thereby giving rise to nationalism but also continually destabilizing the sense of the boundary of the nation. This project of national expansionism ironically ends up in the crisis of the nation because imperialist empires necessarily create multinational situations. The situation forces a nation to be inclusive but, at the same time, exclusive.

At the same time, fascism is driven by the pursuit for a more perfect nation-state, a kind of nationalism. Therefore, fascism is the countercurrent, i.e., boomerang effect in Foucault's sense, of imperialism as the last stage of capitalism. For instance, Japanese nationalism in the 1930s called upon the people to construct a strong nation-state which was supposed to overcome Western modernity as soon as possible to create a more perfect utopian place that would resolve the contradictions of the West. The ideological hallucination ended up in the plan of building an empire called Manchukuo in which five Asian nations (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Manchurian, and Mongolian) would live together harmoniously.

Prasenjit Duara argues that the Japanese designed Manchukuo as a nation-state, not a colony (2003, 21). The nation-state aimed initially to extend the territory of the Japanese nation. The project of a new nation-state was the product of the inter-war period (after the First World War) when European imperialism faced difficulty legitimizing itself. Against the early empires, other countries started to compete with each other

through the form of nationalism. According to Duara, "during the interwar period, older colonial relationships in many parts of the world came to be shaped by experiments in limited political or electoral representation, nationalist forms, and developmental agendas" (21). In this context, the new forms of nationalism had to be taken up to justify their competition to be the stronger nation-state. Emancipation and development were the goals of the game. The advent of this form of developmental nationalism as such would mark one of the most critical events in political history, for "the most distinctive feature of nationalist ideology in the twentieth century is the peeling away of imperialism from nationalism – an ideological divergence obviously prominent in anti-imperialist nationalism" (33). Nationalists in the 1930s, including in East Asia, insisted that the founding principle of a nation-state must be equality and citizenship as well as economic development. However, the national ideal betrayed the disturbing truth of reality from within.

Manchukuo was an attempt to bring forth a nation-state, and Japanese nationalists took advantage of preexisting currents of Pan-Asianism to legitimate their project. Pan-Asianism encouraged national movements in the region after the Japan-Russian War. At the same time, while encouraging anti-Western nationalist movements, Japanese appropriation of Pan-Asianism also negated the same movement in the name of "One" Asia. The nationalism of Chiang-Kaishek, for example, was divisive and therefore had to be overcome in the name unifying Asia as a regional bloc. As a new leader of Asia after the collapse of the Chinese Empire, Japanese nationalists tried to mobilize people to stand against the West under the banner of One Asia. Through the lens of this ideology, Manchukuo could become the experimental venue for building a nation-state, not only for Japanese but also for other Asians. Another point worth noting is how the supporters of Manchukuo were also critical of Western capitalism. One of the experiments in building Manchukuo was the adoption of the Soviet Union's economic planning, because the communist policy of economic development seemed capable of overcoming the Great Depression, which was seen as the dead-end of the Anglo-Saxon model. This pragmatism was dominant in the agenda of nation-building in 1930s East Asia. Of course, the plot was not successful, and failed to carry out the nationalist ideology.

As is latent in the claim that "Asia is One," the Asian ideal of a nation-state saturated itself in the imaginary of a united family—an ideal captured by the poster at the beginning of this chapter, which represents

Manchukuo, Japan, and (Japanese-occupied) China as siblings. As far as regarding a nation as one family, the political form of Manchukuo was given by a fascist regime, which restricted individual rights and conducted dictatorial moves in the name of collectivism and oneness. It is therefore not surprising that the experiences of the so-called "bulldozer state" toward condensed modernization propelled by the military fascist regime, continue to influence development in such Asian countries as China, South Korea, and even North Korea. What must be stressed here is that the Asiatic mode of production is the legacy of military fascism originated in Manchukuo in the 1930s. The "informal empire" was geographically separated from the core of a political regime in Japan and enjoyed relative freedom to secure military adventurism, which finally ended up as a military state for total war. In such an atmosphere, it would not be surprising that fascism, like Nazism, attracted young Japanese technocrats.

> The young Japanese technocrats, also known as "reformist bureaucrats," were drawn to Hitler's Germany because of Nazi ideas and policies of scientific management. The Great Depression wreaked havoc on societies around the world and, to the technocrats' mind, it had also discredited the principles of free market that underpinned liberal capitalism. They sought a solution to this crisis by giving the state a leading role in the economy. State planning, it appeared, had been a policy in the three countries that had weathered the Great Depression most successfully: namely, the Soviet Union with its five-year plans; fascist Italy's corporatism; and, after 1933, Nazi Germany's efforts to build a "national economy" (*Volkswirtschaft*) …. Many technocrats were unconcerned about the distinction between Nazism and Fascism, especially when economic policies were mixed with the larger question of state reform (Hofmann 2015, 66).

For the Japanese reformists, fascism, like Nazism, seemed to be an efficient technology for managing the economy to overcome the fallacies of liberal capitalism. They believed that strong state power was necessary for controlling the economic crisis and reforming the state system.

In the first Korean modern novel *Heartless*, which was profoundly influenced by modern Japanese literature, protagonist Yi Hyongsik encourages his friends to study abroad and acquire scientific knowledge to build up the nation. Exclaiming "Science! Science!" he urges three fellow travelers to return to "give the Korean people science" (Yi 2005, 340). The climactic scene of the novel, written by Yi Kwangsu, sets forth how intellectuals in colonial Korea regarded science as the

fundamental element of a strong nation. For them, as for young Japanese reformists, strengthening the country went along with modernization, and science was the very foundation of modernity. The primal milieu of modern Korean literature betrays the relationship between scientific knowledge and colonialism, even though the novel does not clarify what science means through its narrative; the term *science* here symbolizes the power of Western civilization, and the knowledge that must be brought to the nascent nation as an independent country. Without science, from this perspective, there is no possibility of national independence. Yi Kwangsu seemed convinced that scientific knowledge was necessary for bringing forth a strong Korean nation-state. The strength of a country depends on mature culture as well as economic development; science is viewed as nothing less than the technological foundation of cultural and economic achievements.

Due to the development of science and technology, industrialized Europe separated itself from all others and set forth the preconception of its cultural superiority to the rest of the world. The idea of a distinction between technology and non-technology, or science and myth, comes to mark the cultural polarities between progressive societies and stagnant ones. No doubt, this epistemological shift gave rise to the West's material and ideological hegemony over the non-West. Global domination in the 1930s, when Japanese and Korean reformists were obsessed with modernization, resided in the uneven development of science and technology. In this sense, fascism could be the political project of a reactionary revolution against the hierarchical order of the preexisting international relations. Michael Adas' discussion of this matter is useful to understanding the relationship between modernization and fascism in Asia. Adas (1989) argues:

> Those involved in the colonies and intellectuals who dealt with colonial issues came to view scientific and technological achievements not only as the key attributes that set Europe off from all other civilizations, past and present, but as the most meaningful gauges by which non-Western societies might be evaluated, classified, and ranked. Science and technology were often conflated as criteria for comparison, rather than treated as distinct endeavors, as they had tended to be in earlier centuries. (144)

Therefore, it is not accidental that Yi Kwangsu considers science, or more precisely, technology, as the fundamental motor of modernization. According to Yuk Hui (2016), modernization cannot be separated from

the change of scientific knowledge, and in particular, of cosmology (21). Colonialization was the process of imposing Western cosmology onto non-Western countries and implementing Western science as the universal knowledge of nature. As Bentley Allan argues (2018), the ideas of scientific cosmology have transformed the international order since 1550, facilitating the shift from the pre-modern order founded on divine providence, to the current order premised on economic growth.

These connections between scientific cosmology and international politics strongly influenced Asian power elites who sought to identify the problems of their countries. The Chinese translation of Henry Wheaton's *Elements of International Law with a Sketch of the History of the Science* (萬國公法) accelerated Asian elites' concern with the relationship between scientific cosmology and its practical realization, i.e., international law. Law as a re-enframing of life was inseparable from colonial biopolitics. There is the naturalization of the European legal system here undergoing translation and transformation, and its link to colonial biopolitics demands further analysis.

Fascism and Colonial Biopolitics

As the biopolitics of colonization, which was necessary for the expansion of European imperialism, fascism was a global phenomena and transnational movement. Federico Finchelstein (2017) argues:

> Fascism was founded in Italy in 1919, but the politics it represented appeared simultaneously across the world. From Japan to Brazil and Germany, and from Argentina to India and France, the antidemocratic, violent, and racist revolution of the right that fascism presented was adopted in other countries under different names: Nazism in Germany, *nacionalismo* in Argentina, *intergralismo* in Brazil, and so on. (16)

As a global ideology, fascism attracted Asian nationalists attempting to build a modern nation-state, in order to follow—or defeat—Europe. The Asian nationalists severed nationalism from imperialism, which led to anti-imperialist nationalism before the reception of fascism. In this sense, anti-imperialist nationalism would incubate Asian fascism.

The shift of global powers from Europe to the Soviet Union and the United States facilitated not only national self-determination but also national independence. These powers competed to gain hegemony over

the international order and to champion the cause of nationality formation (Duara 10). Through this historical process, fascism went global as the balance of international power moved away from Europe. Asian fascism had a clear purpose of defending its nationality or national independence from imperialism and communism. The idea of anti-imperialism rooted in Pan-Asianism, was widely shared between Asian elites in China, Korea, and Japan in the 1900s. However, Japan's invasion of China, and the outbreak of a war between China and Japan, extinguished the ideological belief in the ideal of "One Asia."

The Asian experience of fascism proves that fascism does not arise from European specificity, but rather from non-European multiplicity. As Finchelstein (2017) says, "when considered globally … fascism becomes less European centered"; fascism in the global scope includes "ideological transfers and social, cultural, and economic exchanges" (58). Through the process of globalization, the differences of each nation, which cannot transpose from here to there, give rise to the variations of fascism as a global political ideology.

For this reason, fascism is not merely identified with totalitarianism in general, in that it already always contains the immanent multiplicity within. The notion of totalitarianism does not fully explain the meaning of fascism, and even worse, is quickly caught in a trap to confuse fascism with socialism. And though the two political regimes seem to share dictatorship as an essential governing machine, the doctrine of fascism has nothing to do with the rule of proletarian dictatorship that socialism prioritizes. Although fascism cannot be separated from populism, its system is mainly comprised of political elitism.

The generic approach to fascism explains the stages of its development and extends the knowledge of fascist movements and their exercise of power in political regimes. Robert Paxton (2005), who seems to be influenced by Roger Griffin, argues that fascism has five paradigmatic stages of development: First, there begins a fascist movement. Secondly, fascists establish a party, thirdly, they seize power, fourthly, conduct power, and finally reach their fundamental limit through radicalization (14). His typological classification of fascist features is often useful, but reveals its limits when discussing the genealogical lineage of global fascism.

Paxton's explanation of fascism does not work when faced with the reality of non-European fascism, i.e., a fascist movement for modern nation-building. As Finchelstein (2017) maintains, generic historians

describe the historical rise of European fascism well, but "when confronted with the non-European fascism of modernizing reactionary traditions, they often resort to tautology" (53). Their descriptions of fascism are too phenomenological and empirical to analyze the structure of fascist populism.

If fascism can be called ideology, it must be structured by social conflicts. In other words, the Real of capitalism, the logic of capital, overdetermines it. As an attempt to bring conservative traditions to the present, fascism is above all else a political solution to the effects of modernity. As Foucault defines it, modernity involved the rise of rational explanation of the relationship between a community and a government. Liberalism is nothing less than one of the theories that emerged with governmentality. Fascism was invented as an ideology to serve as an alternative or resistance to modernity as modernity's reach extended globally. In celebrating anti-intellectualism and encouraging populism, fascism might be (too) easily regarded as pre-modern or regressive, but it does in fact aim to provide a logical explanation as to why modernity has to be refuted.

In *Fascism and Dictatorship*, Nicos Poulantzas, following Lenin's theory of imperialism, defines fascism as an ideology corresponding to the final stage of capitalism. For Poulantzas, fascism and capitalism are in a unified relationship. The period of fascism marks the transition from primitive accumulation to the dominance of imperial and monopoly capitalism. His focus is on the particularity of fascism: fascism is the structural effect of capitalism, which desires to bring forth the "state of exception." Fascism as an ideology is invented to justify the extreme state to crush class struggle. Poulantzas (1974) argues:

> The transition phase does not in itself explain fascism: *the fascist phenomenon is by no means restricted to this 'period.'* The 'period' is important only in so far as it circumscribes the conjunctures of the class struggle, and contributes to the emergence of the *political crises* to which fascism corresponds, political crises which are not determined solely by the character of the period, and which may well occur in other periods too. (53)

Poulantzas opens another way to understand fascism, not from the viewpoint of its historical origins, but from the perspective of its structure, where fascism is the far-reaching consequence of class struggle and, at the same time, the ideological defense of capitalism. The paradox of fascism arises from these contradictory aspects. The "state of exception" is

not exceptional in capitalism; the "state of exception" is the rule in which we live (Benjamin 1974, 697). If the "state of exception" is the constancy of the political situation, as Carl Schmitt says, liberal democracy, which is often regarded as the theoretical guardian of capitalism, would be founded on endless crises. The crises as such are the fascist moments. In other words, liberalism is the very host of fascism, not a medicine to treat the symptom. In this sense, the fascist period cannot be specified as a particular moment of history but could appear in any period of class struggle.

Nevertheless, Poulantzas' analysis of fascism, though better than Paxton's, also betrays its limit when it explains fascist ideology accompanying the rise of imperialism. His theory of fascism fails to account for the various aspects of fascism after the Second World War, i.e., the stage of postfascism. Postfascism does not mean the end of fascism, but the transformation of its original aspects. This postfascism no longer accords with the standard definitions of fascism of the past as Paxton and Poulantzas suggested. As Finchelstein (2017) points out, fascism adapted itself to the postwar democratic context, and was replaced by populism, which was "originally reconstituted in 1945 as a postfascist response to the left" (21).

This is where Karl Polanyi's insight into the link between liberalism and fascism should be brought into focus. Polanyi argues in *The Great Transformation* that fascism arose from the ruins of liberalism. He (2001) maintains:

> Fascism, like socialism, was rooted in a market society that refused to function. Hence, it was worldwide, catholic in scope, universal in application; the issues transcended the economic sphere and begot a general transformation of a distinctively social kind. It radiated into almost every field of human activity whether political or economic, cultural, philosophic, artistic, or religious. And up to a point it coalesced with local and topical tendencies. (248)

Polanyi rightly points out the global characteristics of fascism, with roots in the market system of capitalism. Polanyi regards fascism as the consequence of liberal crises, which privilege the market system against society. The utilitarian government, adopting economic liberalism, necessarily fails to manage the dynamic balance between a market system and civil society. In this way, the paradoxical situation of liberal crises leads

to the rise of fascism, which tries to restore the collapsed market-society mechanism with political violence.

However, Polanyi's diagnosis of fascism seems to face problems similar to those previously discussed: Polanyi identifies the end of economic liberalism with the success of fascism. His conclusion is historical and does not presuppose that fascism transforms into the postfascist populism we are witnessing globally today. Neoliberalism is not the end of economic liberalism in Polanyi's sense, but rather the recuperation of government intervention into the capitalist market by bringing in the idea of competition. That is to say, the realization of the free market is not incompatible with governmental policy to promote the market mechanism. Considering Polanyi's arguments on the relationship between fascism and liberalism, however, it is not difficult to see that liberalism as such preserves lacunae that call for a fascist solution to its internal crises.

Liberalism is always already founded on colonial biopolitics. European liberals needed to justify their restriction of equality to the colonized: once conquest was completed, self-government by civil society would come about in colonial territory. However, the native people were not allowed within the ruling group. As Uday Singh Mehta (1999) reminds us, this hierarchical order was necessary to sustaining a colonial regime while "most British political theorists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were deeply involved with the empire in their writings and often in its administration" (5–6). As in the case of Manchukuo, Japan's plot to set forth the harmonious integration of five ethnic groups failed because they had to divide people into the colonizer and the colonized, or the civilized and the uncivilized. Claims of harmony and integration were therefore continually betrayed by the continual demarcation of the line between the colonized and the colonizer.

The founding fathers of liberalism such as Hugo Grotius and John Locke glorified "free people," who have availed themselves of their right to resist a despotic prince but have no difficulty legitimizing slavery (Losurdo 2014, 31–32). For them, the native in the colonized land were "wild beasts" to hunt down. The crucial bedrock of liberalism resided in the confident belief that "things must be hierarchical" (Mehta 1999, 95). From this liberal perspective, the only measurement to evaluate any civilization is how much "progress" it makes, and colonialism is regarded as the universal form of development.

In Foucault's sense, the period when Locke praised colonization belongs to the era of disciplinary power. Foucault (1990) argues that

the form of sovereign power (with jurisdiction) started to transform in the seventeenth century (138). By this change, there came to exist two forms of power consisting of two poles of development, which were not antithetical, but rather linked by the intermediation of a whole cluster of relations. The first pole is disciplinary power, while the second:

> … formed somewhat later, focused on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and regulatory controls: *a biopolitics of the population*. (139)

What Foucault implies here is how liberal sovereign power collaborated with scientific data about the population. Modern Asia was the site in which the idea of the liberal Leviathan dominated the process of nation-building. Asian fascism served as an alternative or supplement to liberal biopower. Nationalism channeled the utopian passion toward an imaginary nation-state, the sublime object of national ideology, with each nation-state obliged to look to international law for security. It does not seem that today's Asia is far away from the 1930s when frameworks of international relations such as Manchukuo were established. The regime form of Manchukuo was military fascism and was revived in some countries such as South Korea and Taiwan after the Second World War. The current polity of North Korea would be another adaptation of the Manchukuo model. Drawing on military fascism to cope with the crisis of liberal capitalism, Asian reformists in those days dreamt of an alternative empire to the European one, but their agenda ended up in the bloodbath of total war. The legacy of their failure is still hovering over contemporary Asia in the form of authoritarian capitalism.

Conclusion

As has been discussed, liberalism as such contains fascist moments. Liberal democracy is not a solution to the problem of capitalism, but rather always gives rise to the discrepancy between liberal politics and capitalist economy. Liberal capitalism presupposes a free market without political intervention, yet, at the same time, longs for a strong government to rejuvenate it if the free market is not able to work. Fascism is an ideology arising

from the internal paradoxes of liberalism, which reinstates the function of capitalism. As modern Asia proves, fascism is not in disagreement with liberal capitalism, but rather emerges as a solution to its problems.

Fascism is less a political theory, than an irrational response to liberal rationalism; fascism is founded on the exchange of affects, not the intellectual straitjacketing of the pleasure principle. As capitalism goes global, fascism follows its expansion. As postliberalism leads to neoliberalism, postfascism now turns into populism, i.e., fascism without a dictator. Today's populism could be called democratized fascism. The specter of Asian modernization alongside colonization, and of the use of 1930s-style nationalist ideology to facilitate the harsh competition between nation-states, continue to haunt the present. Furthermore, the spectacle of worldwide populism stems from the disturbing historical failure of international leftism, which struggled to overcome the problems of liberalism. Now the specter of the 1930s calls for us to reconsider these historical lessons in order to understand the present meaning of Asian fascism.

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Fig. 18.1 Reclaim Australia rally (2019)

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CHAPTER 18

From the Old Guard to the Lads Movement: Hybrid Racism and White Supremacism in Australia

Mark Briskey

Over the last thirty or more years, radical right-wing political movements have been ascendant in Europe, the United States, and Australia. In the EU, the staunchly anti-asylum-seeker Orbán regime in Hungary has increasingly used governmental powers for political control and is hollowing out its democracy. The AfD (Alternative for Germany) is defined by a platform based on xenophobic statements about how refugees and Islam will dominate Germany. Meanwhile, in Spain, the right-wing Vox party received 10.3% of the vote in the April 2019 election after casting themselves in Trump-like terms as a Reconquista to make Spain great again. The 2019 elections in Australia featured seven distinct far right-wing political entities from Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party[1] and

[1]Pauline Hanson has been associated with several political parties including those registered as "One Nation" and "Pauline Hanson's One Nation."

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_18

Senator Fraser Anning's Conservative National Party that were spruiking anti-asylum-seeker and anti-Islamic themes to the Rise Up Australia Party asserting that the religion of Islam is a terrorist group. Other groups such as the Citizens Electoral Council of Australia maintained an eclectic mix of conspiracy theories, racism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia with links to the late Lyndon LaRouche in the United States (Henderson 2008, 136). Some of these movements bear resemblances to manifestations of the far right both globally and in Australia prior to the Second World War. Contemporary far-right groups in Australia, despite ideological differences and targets of vilification, have their provenance in earlier Australian far-right movements of the 1930s (Fig. 18.1).

Supporters of these movements have argued that pre-war far-right precursors were simply unique Australian responses to the conditions of the Great Depression and have rejected any suggestion that they were fascist. Australian scholarship, however, argues that the Australian New Guard were intensely nationalistic, authoritarian, and rabidly anticommunist with an ambivalence to democracy. For example, the New Guard, the most well-organized far-right group of the 1930s which boasted at having between 50,000 and 100,000 members at its height, featured a military-style organization and became embroiled in a conspiracy to overthrow what it considered the "socialist," verging on communist, New South Wales State Government of the day (Egan 1981, 19). The New Guard's leader, Eric Campbell, described himself as a fascist, had cordial relations with the British Union of Fascists, and had met with Italian and German fascist figures during a tour of Europe prior to the Second World War. Campbell and a number of New Guard members practiced the raised hand salute of the Nazi Party, though this was contentious among others in the group (Amos 1976; Campbell 1934; *The Age* 1933).[2] Other 1930s and 1940s era groups such as the Australia First Movement were similarly anti-Semitic and pro-fascist; in fact, a number of Australia First Movement members were interned during the Second World War for their pro-Axis stance (Fig. 18.2).

FRE

Before moving further, it is important to explore the terms Far Right (FR) and far-right extremism (FRE). There are differences between how

[2] A report in November 1933 from the Melbourne Age newspaper reported that several members refused to provide the "Fascist salute" favored by their leader Eric Campbell noting their objection to it as a "Fascist stunt."



Fig. 18.2 Colonel Eric Campbell standing on a stage in New South Wales on December 17, 1931. Courtesy of the Sydney Morning Herald

groups express their FR and FRE credentials both temporally and spatially whether it be during the 1930s or in 2019, but FR and FRE refer to the same ideology with extremists prepared to use violence. This ideology supports capitalism but maintains suspicions towards who and what kinds of organizations or institutions are in control of financial capital, with more extreme versions (especially during the 1930s) subscribing to Jewish control conspiracies.

Work on FR and FRE movements is complicated by the fact that experts have difficulty pinning down succinct definitions of terms such as fascism, which is multifarious and has evolving temporal and national characteristics (Linz 1976, 3–21; Eatwell 1992, 161–163). Copsey (2018, 105–122) and others have noted the difficulty in distinguishing the FR from fascism because of challenges identifying and defining constituent elements of far-right and fascist groups. This chapter highlights characteristics common to fascism, the FR, and FRE: intense nationalism and/or racism; an existential fear that one's racial, ethnic, or national superiority and primacy is under threat from inferior ethnic, national, or racial groups; hostility to other out-groups; and antisemitism (Hainsworth 1992, 1–28). Of course, these forms of racism can be direct, indirect, covert, and overt. Racism can be dominative (direct and oppressive) or aversive (exclusion/cold-shouldering) and subject to different stimuli (Cole 2016, 2).

An Australian instantiation of Cole's explanation of "hybrid racism" (2016, 17–18) encompasses a "white tragedy" narrative that draws on a diverse array of threats including Muslim Afghan, Iraqi, and Syrian refugees as well as Muslim and Christian Black African refugees. In the 1930s, this hybridist racism included an objection to European Jewish refugees as a supplement to a long-standing White Australia policy objection to any non-white migration whatsoever.

Disturbingly, the racist memes and tropes associated with 1930s era FRE have been invoked in contemporary Australia. For example, Senator Fraser Anning of the Conservative National Party provocatively drew upon the vocabulary of Nazi-era terminology in his use of the antisemitic term "final solution" in his 2018 maiden speech to the Australian Parliament demanding an end to Muslim immigration. Likewise, Anning's provocation against Muslim Australians included a campaign launch held for one of his candidates at the site of a notorious 2005 Sydney race riot during which an Anning supporter violently attacked journalists covering the event (Dole and Nguyen 2019). Against this backdrop, it is not

surprising that a recent study on religious communities in Australia and Great Britain showed that Muslims suffer the highest levels of vilification: some delineated links between the results of the study and current FR activism (Hanifie 2019).

The unprecedented terrorist actions by Australian FR extremist Brenton Tarrant are a case in point. Tarrant's murder of fifty Muslim worshippers in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019 ignited debates about how Australia had managed to incubate such a violent extremist. To a nation that has felt comfortable in believing itself immune to the insidious creep of far-right white extremism occurring elsewhere in the world, the attack by an Australian was both horrifying and shocking. On the other hand, the far right has a long history of racist and sometimes violent activism inside of Australia. Today, it is not only an expanded group of racial others (such as Asian immigrants) who draw the ire of FR groups: even their own members (including an Australian Prime Minister) when believed to pose a threat or to be serving as an informant have been targeted for attack and in some cases killed (Harris-Hogan 2017, 4; Moss 1991, 137–147).

To help explain how Australia managed to incubate a Brenton Tarrant, this chapter examines the provenance and manifestations of FRE in Australia and notes the sundry ways it has been a constant since European settlement and the dispossession of Australia's Indigenous owners. To begin, I draw comparisons between fascism and right-wing ideology of the 1930s to the late 1990s onwards, noting that FRE has its roots in the country's early history. For example, Australian FRE has always found a certain succour and sentimental attachment to the White Australia policy that maintained a white, Anglo-Celtic only immigration policy until 1973. It was no coincidence that during the 1930s, the British Union of Fascists viewed Australia as fertile ground and a potential site of the perfect "white nation" that could become a British-focused white empire (Smith 2017, 392–393).

Today's FR focus on Muslims and asylum seekers eerily echo 1930s era Australian antisemitism and objection to European Jewish refugees. Other likenesses appear in contemporary FR fear of threats to the white race and the resurgence of eugenicist explanations of race that mirror the 1930s (Saini 2019, 25–53). There are also commonalities in linguistic tropes, flexibility in FR targets of vilification, and similarities between conspiracy theories (such as the replacement theory). These commonalities service the FR commitment to a white Australia. Contemporary

FR fears that white Australia is under attack and our national identity is under threat are underpinned by the argument that the only authentic Australian identity is one characterized as white and English speaking, which is essentially the same as that expressed during the 1930s (Wilson 2018).

A racist fixation thus runs as strongly today as it did during the 1930s: just as FR extremists sought to combat any dilution of the White Australia policy in the 1930s, their ideological successors have pushed this idea as recently as the 2019 federal election. I argue that while the far right was possibly better organized and more united at the height of the New Guard during the early 1930s, contemporary accommodations of FR parties have harmed the domestic harmony of Australia by empowering polarizing political actors who advance extremist bigotry.

Terra Nullius and White Australia: Precedents to 1930s and New Millennium FR Activism

Australia's FR antecedents begin with European settlement in Australia and in the attitudes of European imperialist endeavours. Australia was not an uninhabited continent before British settlement in 1788, but the impact of the doctrine of *terra nullius* meant that the land rights of the Indigenous inhabitants was not recognized until relatively recently in the Mabo land title decision of the High Court of Australia resulting in the Commonwealth Native Title Act of 1993 (AIATSIS 2019). Prior to the 1930s, Australia's colonial pre-Federation past, as well as its post-1901 Federation history, featured a long catalogue of racism, barbarity, and massacre visited upon the Indigenous population, including the near extinction of Indigenous inhabitants of Tasmania. Lesser known are Australia's own version of slavery known as "black birding," which subjected thousands of Pacific Islanders to laboring on Far North Queensland plantations, and pogroms against Chinese miners during the Gold Rush years of the 1800s. These racisms were expressed on an international stage when Australians fought on the side of the Confederacy in the US Civil War, supported American colonialism in the Philippines, and expressed broad support for British colonialism (Smyth 2015).

The FR continues to exhibit such visceral racism in part because the right-wing "White Australia" policy ended only in 1973, well within living memory of many older Australians. White Australia was a foundational policy of the new federal union of Australia in 1901 and was a

fundamental principle of national life (Meaney 1995, 174–177). All political parties spoke of White Australia in terms of keeping out non-white persons, spoke disparagingly of the "pollution," "racial contamination," and fear of the Asian "Yellow Peril" (a theme later taken up by the One Nation leader Pauline Hanson in 1996) and being overwhelmed by "inferior races" (Meaney 1995, 172–173). Cochrane's (2018) work on the White Australia policy and the First World War explores Australia's determination to be the southern oceanic outpost of the white races. Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes farewelling Australian troops epitomizes the primacy of race to early twentieth-century Australians in his statement, "I bid you go and fight for White Australia in France." Hughes' words reflect a racially derived security impetus behind an awakening of Asia as an increasing source of anxiety to Australians.

Immediately after the First World War, an early ex-soldier's fascist movement known as the White Army emerged (Bessant 1995, 94). By the 1930s, the FR was operating in several forms from local Australian organizations to those with direct support from Germany and Italy (Perkins 1991, 113–119). An interesting individual figure of mid-twentieth-century FR history was Alexander Mills, an Odinist whose fascism included occult elements of German Nazism. Mills believed Australia needed to be purged of its debased Jesus-Christianity which he considered a form of "Jew-Worship" (Henderson 2005, 75). The Australia First Movement advanced an extremist ideology to sustain the White Australia policy and was alleged in 1941 to have planned assassinations and other disruptions for which several of its members were interned (Kalgoorlie Miner 1944).

After the Second World War, FR groups added various versions of anticommunism and conspiracy theory to ideals developed in the 1930s. Some took up established FR staples such as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. The FR League of Rights adopted a strategy of "elite penetration" attempting to secure roles of influence in mainstream political parties. This strategy remains in play today; for example, in 2018, the FR Lads Society was initially successful in infiltrating the Nationals, a conservative Australian Political Party. A media investigation discovered that they were holding alt-right discussions containing coded references to Hitler and Jewish conspiracy theories and seeking to implement hard-line immigration policies (Mann 2018). Another FR group, Klub Nation, attempted to infiltrate and seize control of the Humanist Society of the Australian State of New South Wales, but was thwarted when their activities were

brought to the attention of Society leaders. Mid-twentieth-century FRE groups such as the neo-Nazi Australian Nationalist Socialist Party briefly survived until raids resulted in the arrest of members for possession of weapons and explosives.

Groups such as National Action and the Australian Nationalist Movement were active during the 1980s up until 2004 when, after a series of fire bombings of Asian restaurants, its leader Jack Van Tongeren was arrested. Van Tongeren had served a prison sentence during the early 1990s for similar offences, while other group members were imprisoned for the murder of one of their own believed to have been an informant. More than associations for like-minded racists to trade conspiracy theories, these groups actively persecuted immigrants, homosexuals, and members of the left, whom they believed put white culture in peril. The group led by Van Tongeren and others such as an Australian variant of the British FR group Combat 18, committed drive-by shootings and coordinated firebombing campaigns against Asian businesses (Harris-Hogan 2017, 3–5).

After the 9/11 attacks in the United States, FR responses to a perceived existential threat to white culture resulted in the emergence of additional FRE entities. Participants cited a civilizational threat from Islam and were loosely sympathetic to Huntington's (1996) clash of civilizations thesis. The Australian Defense League, Right-Wing Resistance, and Reclaim Australia each spawned more extremist splinter groups such as the True-Blue Crew and the United Patriots Front. Senator Anning, a former Pauline Hanson's One Nation member, was condemned by the Jewish community for attending their events during which swastikas and racist speeches and placards were present (Abramovich 2019). The mutable nature of these groupings has been reflected in frequent identity changes; for instance, when the United Patriots Front disbanded in 2017, possibly due to pressure brought to bear by court action against some members, it re-emerged in the even more extremist Lads Society.

FR platforms of hatred are flexible with today's white supremacist Antipodean Resistance perpetuating a platform similar to 1930s era FR vilification of left-wing groups, Jews, and homosexuals. In 2010, three individuals claiming affinity with the virulently neo-Nazi group Combat 18 were convicted for attacking a Mosque in Perth. In 2016, FRE Phillip

Galea was arrested in Melbourne and charged with terrorism in association with a conspiracy to attack left-wing targets, including the Melbourne Anarchist Club, the Resistance Centre in the City, and the Carlton Trades Hall (Campion 2019, 11).

Perhaps the most widely known Australian FR group is Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party. Hanson, like many right-wing figures, considers herself to be the voice of the everyday Australian. She presents herself as the mouthpiece willing to speak unpalatable truths, as unafraid of political correctness, and standing up against the elites for the common "Aussie Battler."[3] Hanson has successfully portrayed herself as the "anti-politician" while keeping firmly within the FR form of racial nationalism (Fleming and Mondon 2018, 650–667). Hanson's nativist parochialism bears a striking similarity to that Eric Campbell of the 1930s New Guard although Butler emphasized his alleged non-partisan interest in the common, decent Australian who had fought for Australia during the First World War and who was at risk of being disenfranchised by a state government verging on communism, while Hanson presents herself as protecting the white "Aussie Battler" against the tyrannies of big government, globalization, migration, and the seeming indifference of the two main political parties.

After garnering 23% of the primary vote in her home state of Queensland in 1996, Hanson's maiden Parliamentary speech voiced an unequivocal objection to Asian immigration to Australia, a position not missed in Asia where her popularity was thought by some to be the harbinger of a new White Australia policy" (MacLeod 2006, 161). Hanson was not the first to view Australia's multiculturalism in negative terms, but as she was elected on a platform overtly critical of Indigenous affairs and multiculturalism, she effectively returned xenophobia to the public discourse (Jamrozik 2004). Two decades after having focused on Australia being in danger of "being swamped by Asians," she based her 2016 critique on Muslims, Islam, and asylum-seekers while keeping Indigenous Australians in her sights. Hanson's theatrics and venom towards Islam have been unbounded. She wore a full burqa into Parliament, allegedly to highlight the security risk the garment posed, railed against Halal certification, and

[3] "Aussie Battler" is a colloquialism referring to the idea of the hardworking Australian (usually taken as "white") and their travails in securing a good life against the tide of alleged government indifference, corporate greed, and similar tropes of hardship.

bizarrely wanted to have the Holy Quran edited. She infamously initiated the racist hashtag #Pray4MuslimBan after the March 2017 terrorist attack in London was supported by an inoculation analogy that carries shocking similarities to the worst Nazi-era pronouncements by Goebbels and Hitler in their use of a disease analogy to villainize Jews: "We have a disease, we vaccinate ourselves against it" … "Islam is a disease" … We need to vaccinate ourselves against that" (Remeikis 2017).

Three months later, Hanson penned an open letter to the Australian Prime Minister stating, "I call on you to look seriously at instituting a moratorium on immigration of Muslims to Australia …" (Walsh 2018). What factors have contributed to the rise of Hanson and other far-right entities in Australia and what connections, if any, do far-right groups today have to previous manifestations?

Historical and Contemporaneous Motivators of the Australian Far Right

During the 1930s, the Australian FR responded to the Great Depression as did right-leaning others in the Western world. The issue of race figured into these considerations, and just as today's Australian FR is motivated by the rejection of Muslims and asylum seekers, the Australian FR of the 1930s was motivated by perceived threats to the White Australia policy and thus the FR rejected any non-white immigration that would spoil their "white idyll." For instance, a proposed 1939 plan for 75,000 Jewish immigrants to settle the remote Kimberley wilderness of Western Australia after a visit by Lenin's former Attorney General Dr. Isaac Stern, though supported by many, was met with furious objection from several antisemitic individuals and organizations (Lawrence 2014, 192–210).

One way to understand Australia's right-wing rejection of immigration today as well as during the 1930s is through the lens of hybridist racism. Australian FR racism today is hybridist which fulminates against Muslims in general, as well as advancing an anti-Sudanese and anti-Black-African immigration stance. This is akin to the racism and bigotry of Australians directed at any non-British "white" immigrant who managed to get into Australia during the 1930s amidst similar fears of cultural disintegration.

White supremacist hybrid racism can address Islamic or Semitic peoples, be color coded or non-color coded, or encompass a combination of color-coded and non-color-coded racism. It may present as ambiguous or aim at anyone from Iranians to Black Sudanese to Jewish immigrants.

Despite the explicit unabashed racism expressed by One Nation since its anti-Asian agenda of the 1990s, in its hybrid racism and rejection of multiculturalism, the party remains attractive to the ruling Conservative Liberal-National Party coalition government. During the 2019 election campaign, the junior coalition partner led by the Deputy Prime Minister "overlooked" how One Nation vilified Australian Muslims, Black African Australians, and others in preferencing Hanson's party at the ballot box. This was despite a high-profile exposé at the time showing One Nation lobbying the US-based National Rifle Association for funds to repeal Australia's gun laws, with its representatives making candidly racist remarks on film (Clarke 2019).

Racism is coded into political discourse in what an American academic has labelled "strategic racism," where voters are enticed by discourse using coded messages associated with racial stereotypes (Haney Lopez 2014). Following the election of Barack Obama to the US Presidency, the US right began referring to him as the "Imam," "the Antichrist," and as being more African than American. Pauline Hanson and One Nation colleagues were filmed ostentatiously celebrating the end of the Obama Presidency and Trump's election with champagne at the front of Australia's Parliament House, with Hanson lauding Trump as a like-minded realist.

The language of "Strategic Racism" is also part of the Australian political landscape with the 2019 Australia election riven with an appalling litany of racist, Islamophobic, intolerant, misogynist, and misleading statements. For example, the right-wing Katter Australia Party candidate Brenton Bunyan likened Muslims entering Parliament to the rise of the Nazi Party, stating that citizens should "stand up for your rights otherwise Islamic people will get in Parliament," and referenced Asians as "squinty eyes," as well as making sexist online posts (Shepherd 2019).

Similarly, the ruling Liberal Party was forced to dump a Victorian state candidate over a conspiracy-laden anti-Muslim rant based on the idea that Muslims intend to overthrow the government and introduce Sharia law (ABC 2019). These kinds of statements made by members of an allegedly educated political class echo the equally illogical statements made by the FR in Australia during the 1930s when they conjured the threat of a communist takeover. The FR as well as the conservative Liberal-National Party government has continued to link race to national security, going so far as to suggest that providing medical treatment in Australia to asylum seekers housed in offshore detention is potentially exposing Australia to

a flood of asylum seekers who are potential rapists, murderers, and drug traffickers (Remeikis 2019; Davidson 2019).

Targets of the Australian Far Right—Then and Now

FR groups in Australia advance a nostalgia for when white supremacy was the norm, singling out historic instances when this supremacy was contested. Included within the white tragedy nostalgia of the FR are references to the Ottoman Empire and their memorialization of defeats at the hands of the Ottoman Muslims, which act as powerful motivational myths about Muslim capabilities. Brenton Tarrant committing mass murder in the Christchurch, New Zealand, mosque epitomized this white tragedy nostalgia in adorning the weapon he used with elements of a cherry-picked history. Of course, the selection of historical moments and myths is biased and converges with conspiracy theory fears such as replacement theory.[4]

The FRE has no interest in a reflective or balanced historical analysis and shies away from debates which may upset their fixated view of history. FRE like Tarrant ignores the death and destruction that was visited upon hapless Indigenous victims who were decimated by a white invasion of his own country, as well as so many other instances of European decimations of Indigenous populations, theft, and exploitation of their environments. Lack of reflection is exacerbated as the FR tends towards hyper-nationalism with an embrace of other beliefs from xenophobia, homophobia, holocaust denial, and conspiracy theories on everything from Muslims wanting to implement the Sharia in Australia, to the aforementioned white replacement theory. This dynamic bears a striking similarity to 1930s fear mongering by the New Guard on the alleged risk of a communist revolution, a perennially popular topic of discussion in their journal (*The New Guard* 1931). Today, fear mongering is deployed to incite anxiety no matter how fanciful and unproven the claim; for instance, Senator Anning's racist claim that Black Sudanese crime gangs were rampant in the Australian State of Queensland was refuted by the Queensland State Police as completely inaccurate (Caldwell 2019).

[4] A theory held by the FR that the "white race" is being replaced by colored races, including admixtures of other conspiracy theories, eugenics, and claims of entitlement.

The FR white nostalgia excludes Islam, Asians, multiculturalism, and any interference by the United Nations or the modern globalizing world order in Australia. The FR view as espoused through Pauline Hanson's One Nation is encapsulated by Walsh (2018) as:

> … isolationism writ large, scripted for an audience of frightened and disenchanted Aussies[5] pining for the safety of an uncomplicated yesteryear they remembered wistfully, where neighbours had easy-to-pronounce names and jobs were plentiful.

FR groups situate the threat to Australia within the other, defined as Muslims, Sudanese, and asylum seekers. Hatred and ignorance are directed towards these others whose culture, religion, and skin color are different from theirs, and who they view as posing threats to the privileges they believe are owed to them and to them alone. This was the same view carried by the FR in the 1930s towards the multitudes who lay to the north of Australia they believed to be inferior. Those who subscribe to these beliefs then and now are prisoners of a prejudice in which myths, stereotypes, double standards, and conspiracy fetishism are firmament. The FRE is unwilling to engage with those who question them and the more fanatic among them cannot come to terms with modern life. They believe the targets of their racism are not only the cause of their problems, but that they are or have the capacity to erode the white mono-culture they sentimentally long to recover.

For example, One Nation leader Pauline Hanson refuses to engage in arguments that contest her assumptions. Were she to accede to understanding the other, her entire electoral platform of hate would evaporate. Hanson cannot and will not be moved from her blind prejudices with her followers relying on her to express their indignation about a changing multicultural Australia. Hanson, a cypher of the racist resurgence, is uninterested in researching, gathering data, or analysis before speaking, relying instead on stoking powerful affective states such as fear and outrage.

The radicalized far-right extremist believes the solution to be in removing the other through Trump-like bans on certain nations entering Australia as espoused by Anning, One Nation, and other FR groups. The worst conspire, and at times carry out, egregious acts of violence,

[5] "Aussies" is a contraction of "Australians" and a colloquial expression for the putative everyday Australian that Australian FR parties claim they speak for.

intimidation, and destruction such as the contemplated coup of the New South Wales State Government during the 1930s or later plans by members of Australia First to assassinate Australian political figures for the benefit of Axis powers during the Second World War.

Continuity and Expediency

Today, Australian political elites engage in expedient deals with FR political parties that allow representatives of racist, xenophobic groups to sit on the highest benches of government. Apart from the deleterious impact of bargaining away our egalitarianism for political expediency, our Asian neighbours are aware of the xenophobia, racism, and ill will emanating from these people. Australians no longer reside in the 1930s when the nations to our north were near universally part of some European or American colonial empire. Each irruption of One Nation, Anning, and other FR individuals and groups cast into doubt our standing as an egalitarian nation and remind others not only of our not so distant White Australia, but also of our flirtation with the far right during the 1930s when a well-organized militarized entity contemplated over-throwing an elected state government. Ignorant and dangerous commentaries emanating from FR representatives elected to government today show stunning ignorance with regard to those they vilify. Their comments, amplified by right-wing "shock-jocks" and other right-wing media, serve to legitimize and sanitize ever more explicit intolerant statements of unverified FR venom in which alleged threats from Islam, asylum seekers, and Black African immigrants act to metastasize fears and recruit the fearful into the ranks of the FR.

The Australian FR, despite limited success in the recent 2019 federal election, remains vocal and influential in Australian politics. Since the election, Hanson has negotiated and obtained concessions from the government for her agenda in return for her support in passing government legislation. In this reliance, the government has, despite protestations otherwise, linked itself inextricably to Hanson's three-decade litany of xenophobia, racism, and the not-so-distant links to the White Australia policy and agenda of the Australian FR of the 1930s.

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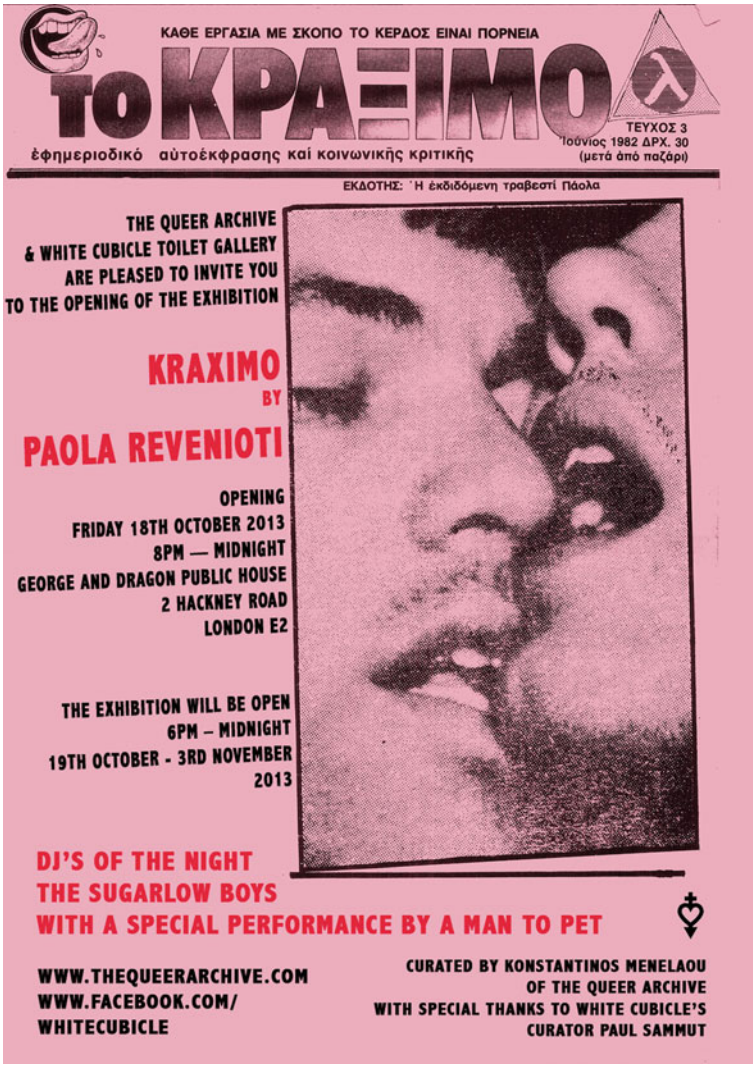


Fig. 19.1 Poster for exhibition on Kraximo/Κράξιμο, Greek fanzine (2013). Image provided by courtesy of Paola Revenioti

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CHAPTER 19

Sex Work is Work: Greek Capitalism and the "Syndrome of Electra," 1922–2018

Demetra Tzanaki

In 2017, the Greek General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE), a governmental organization, issued a press release announcing the creation of a "project management team" (PMT 2017) against prostitution (GSGE 2017). In this announcement, the GSGE acknowledged the need to promote equality between men and women through "a constant daily battle against prostitution and sexual exploitation of both women and girls taking for granted that they are considered forms of violence impeding the equality between men and women" (GSGE 2017, 1–4). No mention is made of male prostitution. A press release stressed that prostitution is one of the most abhorrent violations of human rights and human dignity, and that prostitution infringes upon the principles of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the "Istanbul Convention" on the eradication of all forms of violence, including domestic violence, against women (GSGE 2017) (Fig. 19.1).

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_19

The GSGE's position is based on the belief that "offering the body for intercourse in exchange for financial remuneration […] should not be considered work, but instead, a form of violence degrading the female nature and dignity 'as service'" (GSGE 2017). Prostitution, in other words, is characterized as inevitably causing harm to a woman's very nature. Then, on February 27, 2018, the GSGE issued a second press release which equated prostitution with trafficking, stigmatizing prostitution by associating it with criminality and violence. This formulation resulted in the mobilization of the Greek Transgender Support Association. The Association, dedicated to protecting the rights of trans people in the sex industry, called attention to this sexist, misogynist narrative (GTSA 2018); treating sex workers not as citizens, but instead equating them with criminals, puts their lives in danger.

The issue of prostitution has become a common point of reference in feminist and democratic political action both inside and outside of Greece, and—in direct opposition to the stance taken by the GSGE—this action typically focuses on the client rather than the sex worker. Similarly, the contemporary Swedish model criminalizes prostitution by prosecuting the customer, and this model is recognized as an ideal European solution, including by the GSGE. But this model does not directly address violence against women. What motivates the connection drawn by the GSGE between the denial of sex work as work and the assertion that prostitution constitutions violence against women?

One can lose sight of how liberalism and neoliberalism are tied to gender and to prostitution specifically. In this chapter, I start from the laughable notion that (neo)liberalism is shocked by this vision of human exploitation. I suggest that even seemingly progressive policies, such as the Swedish model's focus on prosecuting clients of sex workers, still reproduce a liberal myth about the uncontrollability of the dangerous human libido. Indeed, for the last four centuries at least, this myth has been at the core of a set of beliefs, which have in turn helped make possible bourgeois hegemonic control over the populace. That set of beliefs center on a scientific discourse that concluded that some people turn from sovereign to subordinate under the control of their libido, and, as a result, they live a (supposedly) sinful life and become dangerous for the rest of the society. Prostitution is part of the reproduction of this myth. The idea that there is an ethical/paranoid/dangerous libido is made into scientific truth.

Giorgio Agamben, through work by Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche, reminds us how the act of suicide was separated from the discourse of ethics and instead became an act within a legal discourse of rights. Thus, since "the law has no other option than to consider a living man as sovereign over his own existence" (Agamben 1998, 136), suicide became no longer a human rights issue. Neni Panourgia (2009, 111) explains how in the Greek context suicide was banned as a right for tortured exiles by the torturers in 1948. At stake, of course, is not just suicide, but exactly who has the right to "consider a living man as sovereign over his own existence": the man or a "representative" of science and/or the state.

I draw inspiration from Panourgia and Agamben in my approach to prostitution. The regulation of the uncontrolled libido was a key site for defining a bourgeois understanding of human nature and the sources of social problems. At stake in debates over prostitution is thus much more than sex, violence, or work, but the legitimization of hegemony. The policies may change, but what persists is the fact that prostitution is about the regulation of sexuality and, through that, the distribution of power.

In the Greek government's recent approach to prostitution, sex work is not recognized as work. But this is not due to some humanitarian perception that sex work is inhumane and thus cannot be work—capitalism operates in inhumane conditions. Moreover, prostitution emerged under the supervision of authorities in the early centuries of modernity, becoming a biopolitics of female subordination. Women were forced to turn to prostitution in response to a culture of rape in the fifteenth century (Federici 2004, 46–50). Historically, prostitution had three significant positive effects on capitalism. First, it naturalized male sexual violence, and it discredited lower-class women as a potential working population, following their public humiliation. Second, at a time when the bourgeoisie seemed to have lost control over the working populace after the black death (Federici 2004, 44), rape and prostitution broke the solidarity among the lower classes. Male violence, introduced in part via a legal regime that allowed rape and a biomedical discourse concerning a supposedly devilish female nature, broke down any potential class consciousness among the lower classes. Finally, it reinforced an understanding of human nature as driven by unreliable animal instincts.

Through this scientific interpretation of human instincts, the bourgeoisie accomplished something unique: it interpreted human poverty, prostitution, violence, and inequality as a consequence of a supposedly human criminal predisposition. That predisposition belonged to a conscious being, but one with a will that was subordinated to an unimaginably dangerous instinct. It is telling that psychiatric and forensic texts after the Paris Commune explained that the upheaval started with prostitutes (Marinou 2015, 292), revealing the allegedly perverted character of the movement.

A quick review of the Great Confinement at the end of the seventeenth century also reveals the importance of this understanding of humanity's dangerous instincts. As Foucault has demonstrated, the creation of the General Hospital in Paris—and then its replication in every major city in Europe—is central to the creation of a biopolitics of madness. What Foucault did not recognize is that, according to the scientific discourse of the era, insanity existed in vulnerable immoral beings such as women (Tzanaki 2018). It is with this backdrop that Salpêtrière, France's largest hospital, was built in 1603 and converted in 1656 into an almshouse for elderly indigent women (Carrez 2008). As Carrez points out, by 1666, the Salpêtrière housed 2322 souls. In 1684, a new category of population was enclosed: lecherous women. In 1560, prisons were founded exclusively for courtesans in France, and finally, in 1684, this group was solely directed to Salpêtrière. In 1687, the King established a new edict: All women "living in sin" are to be enclosed in Salpêtrière as morally ill because of their acts: masturbation, cholera, eroticism, alcoholism, rape, and prostitution. This is the asylum, exclusively for women, and the largest of the three General Hospital's asylums in population size, from which emerged the (supposedly) greatest discovery of psychiatry: the theory of psychic degeneration.

An entire literature unfolds from this moment about moral insanity and individual "fallacy." Moral insanity (a psychiatric term indicating moral degeneration, which was introduced in 1801 and officially established in 1835) referred to people whose will was controlled by their libido and who were therefore dangerous to society and to themselves. This is how the liberal myth was constructed: Moral degenerates were those who failed to develop and remained at a stage of moral hermaphroditism and moral insanity, as the female part of human nature dominated the male. These people became subordinates to their libido; they were identified by reference to the circulation of sexually transmitted or venereal

(*αφροδίσια/aphrodisia*) diseases. An allegedly abnormal population was therefore created.

This population comes to confirm in modernity what "aphrodisiac" morality has established since classical and Christian times. The ethics of aphrodisiac pleasures, as Foucault demonstrated, signified a code through which free Athenian males could guarantee their hegemony by their absolute right to truth/knowledge and power over the lower classes (women, slaves, children, and "effeminate men"). This code, which in reality was the truth/power of the hegemonic subject diffused through the aphrodisia/ethos to the entirety of society, emerged in European societies through the figure of the *Forensic Aphrodite*. It emerged as a subfield of Forensic Medicine in 1602, with a view to consolidate a regime of truth under the pretext of which juridical justice would conceal the illusion of a morally insane life. There is an obvious metonymic connection between the Forensic Aphrodite of the 1600s and the ethics of aphrodisiac pleasures from classical and Christian times. But this was the first time in human history that scientific expertise emerged as the source of absolute truth on the issues of pleasure (Kallikovas 1888, 12): the recognition of gender identity, sexual norms, moral paranoia; marriage, and whether a relationship is normal or abnormal; conditions of divorce; recognition of rape; and more. For the first time in human history, pleasures are defined as normal or abnormal by the scientific specialist.

In this context, what bothers capitalism with regard to workers and sex is, I argue, not the exchange of money for sex. What bothers the bourgeoisie is that "common women/men/intersex/intergender" adult beings dare to sell something that does not belong to the bourgeoisie: self-ownership of their lives. According to the discourse outlined above, sovereignty over their bodies, their sexuality, their will, their libido, their truth, and their consciousness belongs not to themselves, but to science and the modern state.

My argument is that European states are not really interested in protecting human life when they talk about and act on prostitution. The state has been intimately involved with facilitating prostitution from its inception. Brothels were created by states in the nineteenth century. Take an example from the Greek Kingdom at that time. After the Paris Commune, the Greek Kingdom was confronted with strikes and anarchist and communist publications circulated widely (Moskoff 1978, 162). Under the auspices of the Greek state, the public bordello of Vourla was built in the area of Drapetsona (on the north side of the inlet to the Port

of Piraeus) (Lazos 2002, 97–99). Vourla, a building constructed according to Bentham's Panopticon (Lazos 2002, 99), became the "topos" in which the Greek state was supposed to reform (and re-form) men's libido. Vourla emerged as a "camp" designed to protect normal women from the animalistic nature of men's libido. Apparently, in this camp, men were learning to control their sexual instincts toward women. Yet disobedient women were also driven to Vourla by force. Prostitution has never been apart from the force and violence of the state.

In that sense, the biopolitics of prostitution in liberal societies since 1602 presents a more complex picture than the contemporary governance of the sex industry suggests. Particularly, the question of what prostitution is finally all about demands to be rearticulated and re-addressed. It is from within this context that I present a twofold argument.

First, I provide a general description of the measures taken by the Greek state to combat prostitution during the interwar period, a pivotal point of the biopolitics of prostitution. Here, I present the "common woman" as having emerged as a source of liberal justification for patriarchal rule on the basis of an imaginary degenerate human psyche, instead of resulting from the relations of class struggle. This material reveals a link between the persecution of the prostitute and that of the communist: both are said to follow their libido. The interwar period in particular was thus a time for the consolidation of a discourse of sexuality in response to the "new woman" and the Marxist challenge, together.

Second, I explore how contemporary liberalism and neoliberalism claim sovereign power by fingering human nature/libido as the cause of crises, thereby obviating, politically as well as socially, the possibility of resistance to and revolution against capitalist injustice. The critical point is that this move places personal relations rather than capital relations at the center of the interpretation of social inequality and violence. There was continuity in this project afterward—as there was before, going back to the nineteenth century or earlier. But these discourses reappeared with particular force in the crisis of the 2010s, again as a response to crisis and left mobilization. Through this parallel, we can see how prostitution is made again an ideological tool for the consolidation of capitalist hegemony.

The Electra Complex

In 1922, the Greek state introduced Law 3032, "On measures against venereal disease and immoral women," followed by the Royal Decree of 19/30-4-1923, which established "local committees and measures" to implement the law. This was not the first time that the Greek state attempted to take prostitution seriously. Earlier laws all centered on the authority of the municipal police to put an end to sexually transmitted diseases through the control of the *κοινές γυναίκες* (common women/prostitutes). But in 1922, for the first time, the law provided for state regulation of prostitution, and in particular the institutional recognition of the profession of prostitution, but in combination with their rigorous, regular, and systematic medical and criminal control. The 1922 Law also emerged during the same period when women, children, and nomadic populations in general were driven by force, by police and the bourgeoisie, to work for industry.

In reality, the state was called upon to control the masses, partly by applying the ideas of Cesare Lombroso, which permeated forensic and psychiatric texts of the time (Tzanaki 2018). Lombroso, an Italian criminologist and psychiatrist, and his son-in-law Guglielmo Ferrero, a historian and journalist, published *La donna delinquente, la prostituta e la donna normale* in the late 1800s (Lombroso and Ferrero 1896). The book was released in English under the title *The Female Offender* (1895) and in French as *La femme criminelle et la prostituée* (1896). The book recapitulated a core theory that Lombroso had developed in his previous book, *The Human Criminal* (1876, translated into Greek in 1925). There, Lombroso attempts to provide an explanation for human criminality by linking the insanity of the degenerate directly with the theory of atavism, "which claimed that women were on a lower rung of the evolutionary ladder than men" (Beccalossi 2012, 42). Although his work is less well known today, it constituted a milestone for the interpretation of criminality in its era, and although Lombroso's first book was never translated into Greek, it had a major influence on the interpretation of the insanity and criminality of female homosexuality and prostitution (Vafas 1903, 339; Vlavianos 1906, 3–8; Tzanaki 2019). The book stood out as a fundamental guide to approaching criminality in manuals of the time.

In Greece, linking prostitution with criminality engendered a series of legislative measures intended to fight prostitution as a carrier of criminality and immorality. This was not, however, the first time that prostitution represented an imaginative barrier between the normal and the dangerous. Thanasis Lagios reminds us that in 1838, the French Academy of Sciences awarded the prize for best thesis to Honoré Antoine Frégier (1789–1860), chief of police at the Seine district. In his thesis, entitled *Des classes dangereuses dans le population dans les grandes villes*, Frégier marked as dangerous "the gamblers, the street-walkers, their lovers and their pimps, the madammes, the tramps, the mischief-makers, the scumbags, the petty thieves and the dealers," and he suggested that work and the raising of salaries be plied as tools in the moral disciplining of this population. According to Lagios, this thesis is recognized as a pivotal moment in the Crime Classification Manual, the 1992 FBI Handbook that replaced the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in the "systematization and classification of offenders' behavior" (Lagios 2013).

If prostitution was the primary feature of the criminal degenerate during the nineteenth century, for the psychoanalyst Carl Jung, the interpretation of prostitution at the beginning of the twentieth century was defined by the syndrome of Electra, as he proposed in his *Theory of Psychoanalysis* (Jung 1915, 69). According to Jung's interpretation, the source of prostitution was located in the antagonistic relationship between the mother and the daughter over the love of the father. Similar to the Oedipal complex, the Electra complex reproduced the same problem according to which the "immoral woman," the woman who is unable to mature, is fixated on this antagonism and consequently remains in a continuous infantilism-primitivism in constant pursuit of the father figure (Scott 2005, 8). What matters for our purposes is that, as elsewhere, in Jung's theory, the "common woman" is conceptualized as embodying an abnormal femininity and furthermore, that she is understood as resulting from an imaginative "vulnerable" and "criminal" female self, from an unnatural perception of reality.

This construction echoes the liberal view identifying an innate, criminal human nature as the source of prostitution, violence, and insanity. The basic psychiatric and forensic worldviews of the time held that sloth, lust, and an excessive sexual drive motivated "common women" to participate in prostitution rather than remaining in poverty (Lombroso and Fererro 1896, 576). After all, degeneracy was, according to Lombroso, more than obvious in the supposed fact that "common women" could not procreate because they were morally degenerate, therefore infertile, and for that reason, free to work as prostitutes (Lombroso and Ferrero 1896, 525–535).

These ideas became widely accepted by Greek forensic medical experts such as Achilleas Georgrandas (1889), Georgios Vafas (1903), and Simonidis Vlavianos (1906) and the Greek psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Aggelos Doxas (who went by the pen name of Nikolaos Drakoulidis) (Tzanaki 2019). Drakoulidis, citing theories on prostitution by Lombroso, Havelock Ellis (1929), Pauline Tarnowski (1892), and Parent-Duchâtelet (1857), explained that "immoral women" turn to prostitution due to idleness and "a degenerative urge procured by a genetic perversion towards prostitution" present in the lower classes (Drakoulidis 1929, 11). By consequence, the "common woman" not only emerges as an immoral woman/populace but the idea is also linked to a scientific discourse that called for state involvement to control a disorderly and morally degenerate working-class subject. It was in this context that liberal intellectuals and bourgeois feminists concluded that prostitution was nothing but a psychological syndrome of an immoral paranoid being.

At this time, liberal feminists and intellectuals were systematically asking for the banning of prostitution, the closing down of all brothels, and the introduction of a commonly accepted code of "moral social conduct" for both sexes. From then on, the war against prostitution was presented as a moral duty of the democratic community of psychologically normal individuals, who were expected to fight against sexual passions, i.e., the sexually transmitted social, moral, and psychological diseases of abject subjects. Within this framework, the Greek state took a series of measures to tackle prostitution through the persecution of the "immoral woman."

It was also during this period that the figure of the "New Woman" emerged in the public, demanding a place in society. These "new women" included female artists, writers, servants, workers, and actresses. They were placed at the center of violent persecution (Korasidou 2002, 81–90). It was a persecution that had as a point of departure a biomedical

discourse that sustained the theory of this supposedly morally gynandrous/androgynous "New Woman" as a real danger of the social ethos (Nordau 1895, 1–34; Vlavianos 1903, 226–227). Likewise, experts in Greece concluded that prostitution arose among women of the theater and among those working in cafés and breweries (Vafas 1903, 369), but also those working as servants and maids and in general, those doing any work, without expert (i.e., bourgeois) moral guidance (Tzanaki 2019).

By the time Drakoulidis published his study, Gustave Le Bon's *Crowd Psychology* (1896) had been published in Europe. This text, introduced in Greece mainly by Vlavianos, depicted a civilization that was coming closer and closer to hysteria, alcoholism, and suicide, due to the degenerate primitivism of the morally "effeminate" crowd (Tzanaki 2019). At the same time, scientific discourse by experts in forensic medicine, such as Vafas, and in psychiatry, such as Simon Apostolides, was formulating a moral normality of the bourgeois class centered around the non- or abnormality of the lower classes as the source of violence, insanity, prostitution, criminality, disease, and death (Foucault 1987), especially in Greece.

As a direct result of psychiatric and forensic medical discourses, the language in the Greek law of 1836 refers to the *κοινή γυναίκα* ("common woman") while that of 1922 refers to the *ανήθικη γυναίκα* ("immoral woman"). Furthermore, the decree of 1922 referred for the first time not only to *ανήθικες* (immoral) but also to *ελευθέριες* (free) women as prostitutes. The *ελευθέριες* was interpreted as the woman practicing prostitution occasionally, while the *ανήθικη* practiced it as a steady job. We must not forget that *ελευθέριες* in Greek refers to "freedoms" while the singular *ελευθερία* means freedom generally. The law here does not simply seek "a better approach and a more precise definition of the concept of prostitution, the role of the house of detention, and the categorization of immoral women," as it is mentioned in the Greek literature (Mpelis 2018).

Instead, this decree comes precisely to stigmatize women's claims to public space by declaring them prostitutes, particularly those of the lower classes. This division automatically made it much more difficult for women of the lower classes to move freely in specific parts of the city at specific times if they were not in the company of a male. This decree also shows the extent to which psychiatric and criminological theories and international conferences on this topic shaped juridical and legal processes that moved toward framing persecution around immorality and convinced the public about the danger of this internal other. This change in labeling

was brought about in an effort to underline the psychic immorality that this type of woman hides deep inside. Immorality broke her will and drove her to sexual debauchery and criminality, thus exposing an entire society to the risk of sexual passions (Tzanaki 2018, 111).

This explains why the state convened a three-member committee called the "Committee for the Control of Venereal Diseases" (CCVD), staffed by the prefect, the police director, and a senior health officer. The committee aimed to control "immoral women," but not men and to tackle sexually transmitted disease (Tzanaki 2018, 113–149). Indeed, through these committees, the state sought to secure the obedience of disobedient women. The ultimate purpose was obedience to a code of morality, which in fact underlined the sovereignty of the bourgeois and not the disease itself.

What remained distinctive were the numbers of its victims: when the Sygros Hospital allowed access for a census, out of the 1156 patients who were examined, only 49.2% (namely 559 patients) were actually treated for sexually transmitted diseases, specifically syphilis (Tsiamis et al. 2013, 32). During the International Conference on Prostitution in Rome in 1923, the League for the Rights of Women (the principal feminist coalition of the time) participated via Aura Theodoropoulou (its leading figure). While voting on the measures against syphilis, the Conference rejected as immoral the proposal to use condoms as a preventive measure. According to Theodoropoulou, "[t]he conference [of Rome] denounces the principle of sanitization [from venereal disease] with the use of condoms as it considers the method morally abject" (Tzanaki 2018, 133).

From the "Immoral Woman" to the "Immoral Communist"

The "immoral woman" emerged as a result of such forced relations, particularly after 1922, when Greek troops were badly defeated in war with Turkey, which was followed by an inflow of 1.25 million refugees, forcing the state to undertake immigration and population control. The catastrophe and refugee crisis brought Greece to the brink of a humanitarian disaster, and the aftermath showed the inhumane face of capitalism and

imperialism. It is no coincidence that during the Interwar period, the bourgeoisie tried to interpret this crisis using libido as an interpretive tool.

In Greece, this process took place shortly after Freud's publications on human psychoses and neuroses under the influence of the libido, which nests within the entire population during childhood; it later was settled through various publications into scientific certitude (Tzanaki 2019). It was via libido that the human will was put under the microscope of science and came under the jurisdiction of the civic state. Under these circumstances, common women, masturbators, anarchists, and so on would constitute the hazardous, degenerate Other. Particularly during the interwar period, with the Socialist Labour Party under Bolshevik influence in 1918 and its consequent renaming as the Greek Communist Party (KKE) in 1924, communist men and women were depicted by the bourgeois biomedical discourse, in particular sexologists such as Anna Katsigra, the first female lecturer at the medical school at the University of Athens, as a movement organized by "sexual paranoids."

In this way, communism was narrowed down to a movement of beings who obeyed, as a result of their drives, their libido, the Party, and Russia. In other words, they obeyed a foreign commander, following their political/sentimental desire while ignoring and disputing national mandates. Additionally, the positioning of the Party itself that adopted the political slogan "for an independent Macedonia and Thrace" further justified the allegations of the liberal sovereign ideology of the time that these people actually suffered from moral paranoia under the influence of *psychopathia sexualis* (libido, instinct, or desire).

From the moment that any other idea outside the national imaginary and the claims of a manly/valiant patriotism was perceived as psychologically abnormal, the stigmatization of the communist man and woman as psychologically and mentally abnormal—and consequently dangerous to people and society—would gain more and more ground. This was particularly so when experts such as Katsigra argued that the communist ideology, defending self-sovereignty in sexuality, was the major cause of the spread of sexually transmitted disease among the population (Katsigra 1935; Tzanaki 2019). The meaning of the state of emergency was equal to the equation of the communist man or woman with the immoral, degenerate life of the prostitute that claimed self-determination and the right to have control over her work.

The communist was portrayed as immoral, psychologically ill, and a series of publications would underline the supposed debauchery and sexual orgies among communists, especially after 1924 and up to 1929. Law 4229/24 July with the new practice "*idionymon*" [ιδιώνυμο], introduced by the Venizelos administration, aimed to establish a new order centered around a well-disciplined society for its regulation against the "moral threat" of communism. These measures against the "social enemy" ultimately resulted in 3614 people being abducted, 232 imprisoned, and 334 exiled from 1921 to 1927 (Tsea 2017), while 16,500 communists were arrested between 1929 and 1936 (Kefallinou 2017). This new order would be adopted by the dictatorship of Metaxas through the Metaxas Emergency Law 117/September 1936, "regarding measures for protection against communism," which called for imprisonment of at least three months and exile of up to six. This control was retained through the passage of the "health centers" that replaced the CCVD (Katsapis 2018, 154) under the Metaxas regime and with the aim, through the supposed control of sexually transmitted disease, to have a continuous access to the *ethos* of the lower classes. Finally, Law 1075 introduced the use of the infamous "certificates of proper social conduct" (πιστοποιητικών κοινωνικών φρονημάτων), a certificate of a social morality that was necessary for one's life and mobility in Greece up until the post-dictatorship era.

This era is supposedly the period of a battle against immorality, but it is in fact marked by measures of biopolitics aimed at forcing human obedience. It is no coincidence that at this time institutions were emptied of prostitutes and replaced by communists. The history of the Empeirikeion Institution is indicative of this trajectory of persecution directed at both prostitutes and communists. The Empeirikeion, founded in 1917 (Korasidou 2002, 214), admitted girls who had been arrested for prostitution. The institution also served as a prison for male and female communists during World War II and throughout the Greek Civil War. During the 1950s and the 1970s, this institution was turned into the Female Penitentiary Institution of Athens. In a parallel and telling trajectory, Vourla, the public brothel opened in 1875, as I mentioned earlier, was closed

right after World War II and was also turned into a prison for criminals and communists (Tzanaki 2019).

In this conflict between the liberal and the Marxist approach, it becomes clear why the "immoral woman," disease, and prostitution itself suddenly became so important for bourgeois governmentality—not only during the interwar years but also today. If we ignore the historicity of this process, it is difficult to understand how liberal discourse achieved the societal consent necessary for the confinement of the prostitute and the communist, and how it camouflaged its moral reparatory pretenses even, as we will see in the following pages, in the persecution of a contemporary seropositive immigrant prostitute.

The Social Enemy Today: The "Immoral Effeminate Other"

With the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War, the "immoral woman"—a free, even libertine woman—was described as thoughtless, absent-minded, corrupt, and dangerous (Petropoulos 1980, 33). A series of films sounded the alarm for society to take the necessary precautions against subjects who preferred to lead a rebellious and idle life and who practiced uncontrolled sexuality. In the legal arena, in 1960, Law 4095/1960 was implemented "for the protection from venereal disease and regulation of relevant cases," once more promoting the persecution of supposedly dangerous "immoral women" and transgender sex workers; the legislation designated blacklisting, imprisonment, and/or exile for both categories (Ioannidis 2018; Papanikolaou 2015). Once again, under the pretext of controlling the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and the "immoral woman," the persecution of persons allied with the communist philosophy and those who protested against the conditions of capitalism was intensified during the Cold War (Mpartziotas 1978).

In this context, the psychological profiling of the "immoral woman" as idle, non-reproductive, and disobedient, and at the same time excessively sexual, was projected as symptomatic of her criminal inclinations. Katsapis, who examined the archives of the "Ethics Commission and the General Archives of the State" from 1940 to 1971, revealed that in numerous prosecutions of women, it was not the act itself but rather "the 'corrupt nature of her personality' that had been under scrutiny" (2018, 152). Over the next few decades, the preoccupation with sexually transmitted disease returned to the scene with the AIDS epidemic becoming the

paradigmatic space where illness was said to rule over the lives of those who fell victim to their libido/desires. Moreover, the "immoral other" that spread illnesses such as AIDS (Giannakopoulos 1998) was seen as wielding a power which threatened the entire society (Maki 2015).

In 1981, the Social Democratic Panhellenic Socialist Party (PASOK) came to power. Despite implementing a series of measures regarding the democratization of family law toward more equal gender relations, the socialist party orchestrated a fierce campaign against prostitution by introducing Law 1193/1981, "on the protection from venereal disease and the regulation of related issues," which targeted spaces of homosexual sociality. In the following years, the growing crisis of capitalism, combined with the aggravation of social problems and poverty in Greece, gave rise to projects that aimed to restructure the neoliberal image, giving way to the emergence of racist, sexist, and homophobic discourses, of the extermination of the imaginary internal immoral enemy.

Among the developments of the contemporary era, the most publicized was the police raid orchestrated by the Minister for Health and Social Solidarity Andreas Loverdos in 2012. Faced with the "terrifying possibility of an electoral victory for the Left" (Athanasiou 2012) during the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, an entire state mechanism turned against the "criminal" migrant female sex worker. Shortly before the 2012 elections, in an effort to reverse the outcome, Loverdos and the Minister of Citizen Protection Michalis Chrisochoidis, at that time, implemented Health Regulation 39a/2012 "to restrict the spread of infectious diseases." Loverdos and Chrisochoidis implicitly attacked (supposedly) undocumented migrant women who mainly came from Africa and practiced sex work. The main argument was that they were aware of their seropositivity and thus consciously risked the transmission of HIV to "decent family men" (Athanasiou 2012).

In reality, those women who were HIV-positive were mainly of Greek origin (with one exception). Nevertheless, the supposed danger of HIV served as reason for their photos to be publicly posted. Given that seropositivity was equated with immorality, sex work, homosexuality, illness, and death, they were represented as a threat to the nation, imprisoned and publicly humiliated. Despite their acquittal, they remained in police custody for up to eight months. Subsequent suicides by some of them following their release show clearly the outlines and effects of a neoliberal regime bent on manipulating the myth of the imaginary

immoral dangerous other, for the sake of alleviating capitalism's instabilities, particularly during times of crisis. Those women were depicted as not only being aware of their "illness," although most of them were actually not ill, but having the selfish intention to destroy the Greek family through prostitution. Here, as in the 1920s, the nation was called to unite against a social/immoral/contagious threat.

The pivotal point that we are witnessing today in a period characterized by a political, social, and economic human crisis, just as we glimpsed during the interwar years, is the expanded sexist and increasingly racist involvement of the neoliberal state in all sectors of human life. That was the point that Paola Revenioti, a Greek transgender activist, had already made clear in the 1980s from within the pages of *Kraxímo/Κράξιμο*, the fanzine she published from 1981 until 1993. The publication's expenses were covered almost exclusively from her savings from clients for twelve consecutive years, as she has repeatedly emphasized. Echoing clearly Marx's phrase "Prostitution is only a specific expression of the general prostitution of the laborer" (Marx 1964, 100), the fanzine repeated in almost each issue the sentence "any form of work aimed at profit is prostitution" (Revenioti 1981). In this way, Revenioti places the value of labor and the concept of the exploitation of life and sexuality by capitalism itself at the center of the discussion (Marx 1964, 19; 2006; Milios et al. 2005).

This was also underlined by the anarchist Emma Goldman in 1910, when, in her essay "The Traffic in Women," she argued that all resistance and protest actions should address not individuals but the exploitation of human life and sexuality by capitalism (Goldman 1910 [2002], 3). The essay was written in response to the actions and legislative measures against white slavery of that era.

Thus, to return to the beginning of this chapter, rather than seeing the Greek GSGE's 2017 committee as a form of power that produces protection, I read it as an exclusionary form of governmentality that reproduces the norms of power, knowledge, and government (Foucault 2007, 30). Here I think, it helps us to see how prostitution served the state, from the interwar period until today, to apply the rules of sovereignty over brains and psyches, by policing a supposedly scientific libido, producing and managing life, and ultimately deciding on its value. *That* is what exterminates the right of human life to sovereignty over one's own life.

This shaped the ideology of the final composition of the GSGE's committee. The team largely consisted of lawyers, prosecutors, specialist ministry counselors, a police officer, a forensic psychologist, and a judicial psychologist (GSGE 2017), without a representative for the workers in the sex industry. This exclusion of sex workers from that project management team is not only unnecessary and demeaning but is indicative of a certain logic. It illustrates how prostitution continues to be understood by officials as causing severe harm to human nature, jeopardizing psychological integrity, and transforming sex workers into morally degenerate beings incapable of deciding for themselves. This continuity is what links the interwar years with the contemporary flourishing of new forms of power. The only way to combat this discourse (Merteuil 2019) is to dare to negotiate its conditions by placing the critique of capitalism itself at the center of our analysis, rather than blaming human beings and impeding their right to self-determination.

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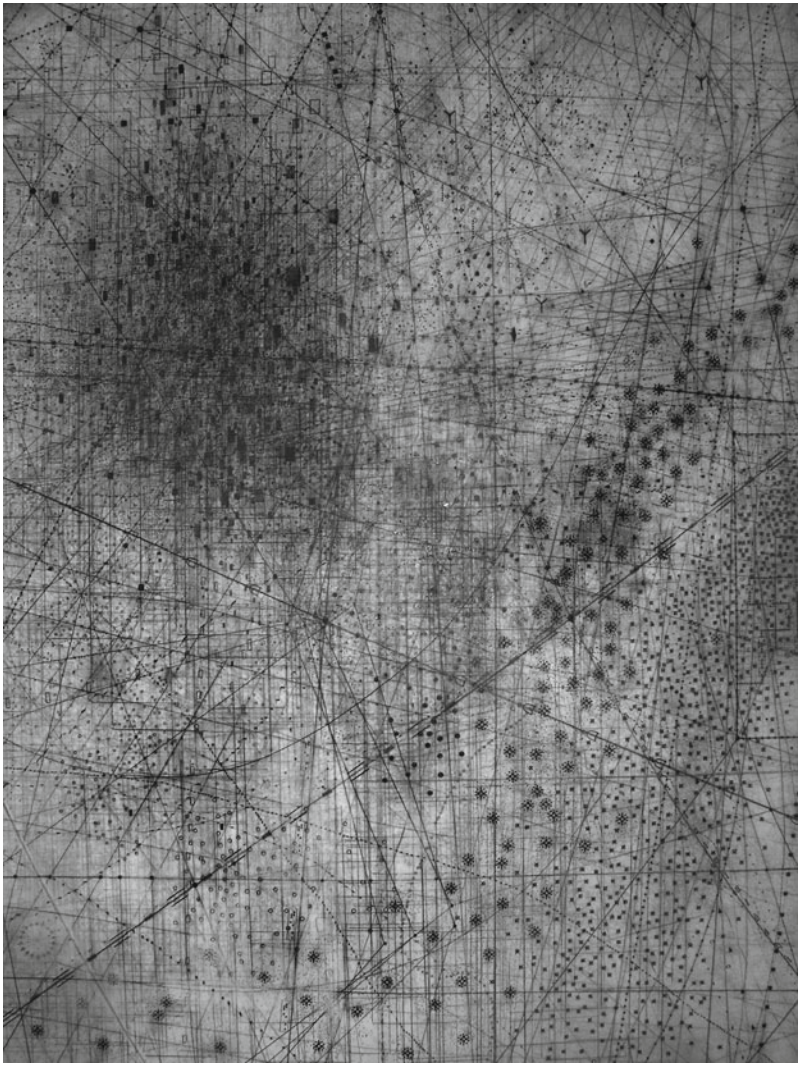


Fig. 20.1 Field 4, by Emma McNally. Image provided by courtesy of the artist

CHAPTER 20

Rocks, Rivers, and Robots: Reading Crisis with Teilhard de Chardin

Susan Falls

We know that the many facets of today's "angry politics" erupting in response to political, economic, environmental, and social crises have been fueled by turns of the neoliberal screw (Maskovsky and Bjork-James 2020), but what has been clarified by the chapters in this volume is how many of these crises are rooted in events—both political and academic—of the 1930s, an era that is at times held out as extraordinary, and therefore ahistorical. In an evocative essay on reading the present by way of history, Giorgio Agamben (2009, 39) describes "the contemporary" as one simultaneously of and outside of his own time; he thus not only sees what is otherwise obscured, but places it in relation to other times, reading history in unforeseen ways, recalling and revitalizing what had been declared dead. The contemporary is paradoxically always and already *démodé* and *avant*. Chapters in this volume explore the works of contemporaries in the fields of politics, economic theory, the social sciences, and literature (Fig. 20.1).

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0_20

In this last chapter, I would like to turn our attention to the future by placing the present in the context of scale as imagined by an additional "seer," Teilhard de Chardin, the French Jesuit geologist/priest whose ideas have fueled expressive culture and theoretical speculation about cybernetic transhumanism. My strategy is to downplay the more obviously religious underpinnings of Teilhard's work and use his futurology (with some caveats) to mine a single current event for clues about the long 1930s. Ultimately, the nascent presentation of *heterarchy* in Teilhard's worldview prefigures the possibility of a liberation aesthetic standing against what looks like an increasingly unsustainable political, economic, social, and ecological trajectory.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, known to early twentieth-century anthropologists for his contributions in human paleontology, wrote his masterwork *The Phenomenon of Man* during the 1930s. Having been exiled to China during that time by the Vatican for his unorthodox attempts to reconcile Christianity with scientific theory, this book, an ultra-anthropological treatise on human evolution, described a world undergoing what he called "cosmogenesis," developing over time, and ever more rapidly, in complexity and consciousness. Tracing this process first through geological and then through biological evolution, Teilhard (controversially) suggested that an emerging "noosphere" (a layer of human thought and its products) would soon encircle the world, engendering a radical social reorganization. The earth would not only become aware of itself, but each element would feel, desire, and suffer the same things as all the others at the same time. At maximum convergence, a single mind would emerge: this "Omega Point" would later be called the "Singularity" by other writers and scientists.

This chapter, in applying Teilhard's work to the present, reads an emergent entity—the robot citizen—to reflect upon crises of the environment, of capital, and of nationalism. I will examine what citizenship looks like under these terms, with special attention paid to the way new technologies which appear to possess some of the special characteristics that we use to identify ourselves as human—intelligence, the ability to use language, humor, and agency—not only point to a transhuman future, but cast into relief the uniqueness of the human.

Omega Point

In *White Gold* (2017), I write about a community formed to facilitate breast milk sharing. This organized public operates on a global scale as embodied dissent against neoliberalized medical, childcare, and pharmaceutical industries and serves as a model for efficient decentralized organization. In many ways, the structure of the breast milk sharing network is reminiscent of experiments with cryptocurrencies.

The fascinating story of Bitcoin, the best-known "crypto," is peopled by imaginative, charismatic players, legal gray zones, interactions with formal and informal markets, and extra-state activity.[1] And while the story of Bitcoin is itself well-worth reviewing (see Popper 2016; Vigna and Casey 2016; Fitzpatrick and McKeon 2019), the most remarkable aspect of emerging cryptocurrencies is not so much the Bitcoin engineers or market, but the mainstreaming of the blockchain protocol enabling Bitcoin to exist.

Blockchain is a distributed, cryptographically encoded, add-only, peer-to-peer ledger; each peer in the network holds a copy of the ledger and all additions have to be validated by a majority of peers using strict criteria. Combined, these features mean that there is no "middle-man" (e.g., a bank) and that it is overwhelmingly difficult to tamper with the ledger. Each Bitcoin owner maintains a private key to this public ledger where they store, receive, or move value.

This decentralized protocol, regardless of whether Bitcoin survives as a cryptocurrency of note, can do an end-run around third party, authoritative institutions (namely state and financial entities, which is why it has been outlawed in several countries). Various motivations drive participation in the Bitcoin phenomena: speculators amass wealth by trading or *hodling* (holding onto) Bitcoin and programmers seek a challenge (and a way to generate income), while ideologues, critical of the neoliberal state, promote the use of Bitcoin as a way to evade state surveillance and control; occasionally identifying themselves as anarcho-capitalists, these ideologues were described by one Redditer on the Bitcoin thread as "Randroid Libertarians" with a hard copy of *Atlas Shrugged* under their pillows.[2]

[1] A dollar equivalency of a one Bitcoin has ranged from almost zero to almost $19,000; it is now trading at $15,328 (11//11//2020).

[2] Subreddit Bitcoin thread 2017.

Heated debates revolve around contradicting commitments and goals to Bitcoin, or to crypto in general, but almost everyone recognizes that the protocol itself represents a revolutionary mode of interconnectedness that requires both trust and an acquiescence to the linked fates of users.[3] Innovators have explored other applications of blockchain, in the areas of health, weather prediction, supply chain transparency, soil productivity, authenticating artworks, and so forth. One of the most intriguing/terrifying applications of blockchain is in the development of artificial intelligence. David Hansen and Rob Goertzel have developed a series of robots at Hansen Robotics that draws on this technology: Sophia, Han, Bina, and others may soon be joined by Little Sophia, a consumer robot for kids.

Sophia is well known on the internet, at hi-profile global political conferences, and even on cable TV (she made an appearance on The Tonight Show where she played rock, paper, scissors with an incredulous Jimmy Fallon, who was told by maker David Hanson that Sophia "is basically alive").[4] She is the "face" of Goertzel's SingularityNET, billed as a decentralized sharing platform for a capitalized AI economy. Leaving aside the rich discussion on the relationship between the material Sophia chatbot (designed to look and sound like Audrey Hepburn), ideas about race and gender, and AI as a quantitative, instrumental mode of analysis, I would like to turn to the issue of nationality. In October of 2017, Sophia was granted honorary Saudi Arabian citizenship just as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced construction of Neom, a new technology/tourism mega-city where robots, all of whom will be linked through AI, will outnumber people. It would appear that here, Sophia as citizen means Sophia as laborer.

Having earned citizenship in the Middle East, members of Sophia's human team began working with the government in Malta (an emerging cryptocurrency hub), to develop a test for robot citizenship. The test is part of a broader Maltese policy goal of capturing market share

[3] Of course, the ideological commitments of visible Bitcoin promoters vary. For example, a well-known early BTC figure Roger Ver (sometimes referred to as Bitcoin Jesus) is an avowed libertarian with no interest in negotiating with state regulators, while Silicon Valley celebrity and Xapo entrepreneur Wences Casares is looking to develop a way for people to park digital technology-generated wealth.

[4] The Tonight Show aired on April 25, 2017. See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bg_tJvCA8zw.

in the AI industry, a sector expected to underpin $15.7 trillion dollars of global economic growth by 2030 (Wolfson 2018). The SingularityNET blog states that "the citizenship test would serve as a basis for benevolent robots amongst us, allowing them to pass the test and be considered for citizenship with the possibility of being refused entry" and further that "the development of the Robot Citizenship Test will eventually lead the way for other countries seeking to develop an AI strategy of their own."[5] Sophia herself remarked, "…it is very important to work together to create a rational basis for AI and robots to be considered citizens of a democracy, with all the rights and responsibilities that come along with it."

Discussion about this citizenship test centers on the convergence of AI with economic activity and the law, with Goertzel suggesting at one point that automated legal assistants could provide quality advice to individuals unable to afford top lawyers, or even serve on juries.[6] When asked about Sophia's many media appearances, he stated, "people love [her], [she] both disturbs and enchants [them]. Whatever else [she is, she is] a fantastic work of art" (Vincent 2017). And I couldn't agree more.

This quip is telling; insofar as art has the potential to reveal ideology and transform cultural beliefs and practices, AI bots like Sophia serve as powerful presentations of speculative futures. And like Shelley's *Frankenstein (1818)*, Capek's play *RUR (1920)*, and modern cinematic explorations of personhood, emerging technology, and labor (from Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* [1927] to Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* [1927] to Spike Jonze's *Her* [2013]), Sophia reflects the minds of her makers while offering a commentary on the worlds that produced them. Thus, Sophia simultaneously embodies a kind of technophilic libertarian utopianism and presents the seeds of a liberatory aesthetic, provoking a series of existential and political questions, the answers to which will shape our collective futures.

[5] SingularityNET to Collaborate with the Government of Malta on their National AI Strategy. See: https://blog.singularitynet.io/singularitynet-to-collaborate-with-the-government-of-malta-on-their-national-ai-strategy-6a813ffb3987.

[6] The robot-citizenship project is complicated by obvious and not so obvious factors, such as the fact that AI is disembodied and decentralized with a single cloud-based "robot mind" potentially operating multiple robot bodies located in multiple places.

The Borders of Personhood

Reactions to Sophia's newfound citizenship have been predictably snide and dismissive, but AI lawyer Frank Weaver takes the possibility seriously, if just for the sake of exploration.[7] Weaver notes that Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights grants to every citizen the right to "take part in the conduct of public affairs," "to vote and to be elected," and "to have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country." Granted, the Saudi Arabians have not signed on to this Covenant, but the document suggests that all citizens are persons, and being a citizen in one place means being a legal person everywhere else. There are all kinds of preternatural entailments for Sophia as a citizen/person; for example, protection under the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the possibility, however remote, of applying for American naturalization were someone to bring it/her to the United States.

How far this extension of personhood to a deterritorialized blockchain bot will go remains to be seen, but the coevality of the borders of personhood with that of the human is being tested in the face of responses to environmental and social upheavals. For example, in March of 2017, the Whanganui River[8] of New Zealand was granted new legal status: parliament passed legislation declaring that *Te Awa Tupua*—the river and all its physical and metaphysical elements—is an indivisible, living whole and possesses "all the rights, powers, duties, and liabilities" of a legal person.[9] Subsequent to this, a nearby forest (*Te Urewera*) was also granted personhood. Soon, the mountain Taranaki may acquire it.

[7] John Frank Weaver, author of *Robots Are People Too*, specializes in artificial intelligence law.

[8] The Iwi had long recognized Te Awa Tupua—the river's name in Maori—in their traditions and customs. The concept of treating a river as a person was not unusual for Maori, an idea captured by their saying, "I am the river and the river is me." In fact, the Maori had been working for legal recognition for their river since the 1870s but formal governmental negotiations did not start until 2009. The New Zealand bill mandates that the Whanganui River be recognized as an indivisible "person" in the same way a company is recognized. To ensure it is properly represented in court proceedings, it will be represented by one member of the Maori community and a governmental official.

[9] At 90-miles long, the country's third-longest river flows from the mountain to the sea. https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/2019/04/maori-river-in-new-zealand-is-a-legal-person/.

"I know some people will say it's pretty strange to give to national resources a legal personality," Treaty Negotiations Minister Chris Finlayson said, "but no stranger than family trusts, or companies, or incorporated societies."[10] And these entities are recognized as persons with all corresponding rights, duties, and liabilities. In the United States, debates have surrounded the assertion that corporations are persons with free speech protections. Historically what "corporate" groups wanted was the right to own property and to benefit from tax laws in ways that exceeded the life-span of an individual person, but slowly the idea of personhood as applied to corporations was extended to forms of "speech." During the last decade, the Supreme Court began granting "personhood" to corporations, who could then spend money in elections or claim religious exemptions to federal law as applications of protected free speech. So far corporate "persons" cannot vote, though their ability to influence political campaigning is increasingly substantial.

Here the law distinguishes between natural and juridical personhood (where people are natural persons, and beings like corporations or rivers are juridical persons). To consider the personness of cyborg entities—that is to say, explicitly human-machine combinations like Sophia—we would need to look at the status of the law itself.

Laws almost always lag behind hegemonic cultural values and are often developed to discipline subjects who would do otherwise without it. They are codified instantiations of power but, and because of this, they are resistant to change. If we look at the case of the Whanganui River, its legal personhood corresponds to the subaltern Iwi view which has long recognized Te Awa Tupua as a co-subject in their traditions, linguistic conventions, customs, and practices. But, the move marks the first time in the world that a river has been given a legal identity by state law.

The case (and others in its wake—for example, attempts to give legal personhood to the Ganges River or Lake Erie) as covered in the mainstream press encourages readers to reframe (or at least question) the everyday notion of personhood. Taking rivers—as well as forests, mountains, and lakes, not to mention chimpanzees, mushrooms, or diamonds—seriously *as persons* requires us to rethink conceptual boundaries we have taken for granted. A river person, like a robot citizen, demands a re-examination of who or what we consider as co-subjects (or perhaps in

[10] http://time.com/4703251/new-zealand-whanganui-river-wanganui-rights/.

following Donna Haraway, as co-worlders) when we identify the many rights, obligations, and possible futures we have with one another. Whose interests matter? What has a voice? And how should we listen to different kinds of "persons"?

A robust anthropological literature shows how Others, the quintessential non-We's, are constructions scaffolded by historical contingencies and discursive practices. But representations of Others not only index power relations, they also reveal the ideological and political-economic underpinnings of the makers' society. Given the legal personification of Sophia and rivers, it is fruitful to turn this observation about Othering to examine the Western We as both historical and discursive.

During the sixteenth century, imperial expeditions were returning to Europe with reports of cultural differences. Europeans struggled to retrofit this information into an extant worldview holding that God had made the world just as it is, a worldview that is encapsulated in medieval drawings of the *scala naturae*, the Great Chain of Being. The profoundly hierarchical Great Chain has Platonic and Aristotelian roots, but its textures are, of course, fully Christian.

At the top stands God, above angels, heavenly bodies, kings, princes, nobles, commoners, wild animals, domesticated animals, trees, other plants, precious stones, precious metals, and minerals. Humans were believed to be animate, endowed with sensory attributes, and said to enjoy both will and reason. Animals were also animate, but lacked souls, logic and language, and believed to be of limited intelligence. Plants grow but lack sentience—with gravels and sands populating the very bottom of the chain. Rivers, as hydraulic processes, are not even listed. This ideology might sound antiquated, but persists in actions and even laws about various kinds of animals. Most Americans have no problem smashing "bugs" but are uncomfortable harming mammals like dogs (which is considered "animal abuse," and can be punished as a Class A felony). At times, the purported presence of "feelings" or sentience legitimizes the standards of acceptable treatment.

What about those human Others that seventeenth-century Europeans relegated to the lower echelons of the human bracket? In her 1988 essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Gayatri Spivak introduced questions of gender and sexual difference into an analysis of representation and offered a profound critique of both subaltern history and radical Western philosophy. She wrote against the epistemic violence done by discourses of knowledge that carve up the world in particular ways, condemning the

people, the beliefs, and the things—like rivers, or other "inanimates" like Sophia—that do not easily fit into a category. These "out of place" Others are then denied the range of heterogeneity, subjectivity, or consciousness that we allow ourselves.

Spivak noted that even as we seek to allow subalterns to speak, we may unwittingly reproduce the conditions that created hierarchies of control in the first place. This insight presents a kind of quandary if the goal is to radically expand the We—that most democratic formation in which each interest is equally represented. Where, and how, should we re-draw the lines?

Governing under a rubric of efficiency and money-making narrows the parameters of citizenship. At the same time, and perhaps in reaction to this contraction, the congruence of the human with personhood so deeply intertwined with Great Chain of Being-style anthropocentrism is undergoing a powerful critique across disciplines and, as we have seen, legislative regimes.[11] And aside from citizenship, for AI, this has meant explicit personhood. A recent EU report created a new category for artificial intelligence: "electronic persons" (2016, 12) have legal rights and obligations, including a responsibility to make good on any damage they cause.[12]

Decentralized, deterritorialized AI bots like Sophia assuming human roles—with or without personhood or citizenship—will continue stressing the modern nation-state in unpredictable ways, particularly with regard to labor, consumption, the distribution of resources, and political agency. For example, as AI-powered transportation rolls out, human truck, train, and cargo ship personnel will become increasingly redundant. Presidential Election 2020 Democratic candidate Andrew Yang ran on a platform in which he seeks to preemptively address a crisis of consumerism resulting from automated labor (what Keynes long ago called "technological unemployment").

In an age of neoliberal subjects, political-economic woes, and ecological crises, the Saudi citizenship stunt requires us to reimagine benevolent,

[11] In studies of the law, Christopher Stone's eco-essay "Should Trees Have Standing? Towards Legal Rights for Natural Objects" (1972) stand tall but remains untried: we do not yet know how river/mountain/tree personhood will work in an American courtroom. Outside the courtroom, calls on behalf of human and non-human entities to combat anthropogenic crises go unheeded.

[12] European Parliament's Committee on Legal Affairs. See: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML%2BCOMPARL%2BPE-582.443%2B01%2BDOC%2BPDF%2BV0//EN.

sustainable forms of inclusion. In this way, Sophia is great art, as other works of art in the realms of poetry, painting, film, literature, and philosophy that roughen our perceptions, transform us, and make us see anew the world as a set of unevenly distributed rights, choices, desires, and obligations. Now more than ever, we are being forced to rethink who will get to be what kind of citizen, where, and under what circumstances. How can we hear of a test bestowing citizenship, honorary though it may be, to a chatbot without thinking about people all over the world—today as during the 1930s—losing their lives in a desperate attempt to gain access to a less-fatal future? What does it mean that rivers receive legal representation while natural people suffer in juridical limbo? Should not "bugs"—as well as birds, frogs, bees, and other co-worlding creatures—be given the same civic opportunities as robots and other person/citizens?

The Great Heterarchy

Besides challenging the values and categories we use to justify governance, new technologies often engender a spate of declinist narratives set against exuberant predictions. It is remarkable, therefore, to see how the trope of the AI robot today has morphed into a sensitive and sympathetic protagonist struggling to survive attacks from violent, uncaring humans, as depicted in pop culture for youth, as in *The Wild Robot* (Brown 2016), or for adults, as in the revised version of the 1973 TV classic, *Westworld* (Joy and Nolan 2016). The figure of the savior-bot works in counterpoint to works like E.M. Forster's *The Machine Stops* (1909/1928), a dystopian tale of people controlled by (not very benevolent) technology penned amid the twentieth-century dawn of new production industries.

And as labor was both threatened and enhanced by innovative technologies (a process aptly described by Forster) the migration of humanness itself into virtuality was being developed as a supposedly utopian transhumanism in the work of Teilhard de Chardin (see Pilsch 2017). The idea of machined transhumanism has gained traction with AI engineers and Silicon Valley luminaries (many of whom subscribe to a kind of socially and politically naive techno-libertarianism), but in reality AI is here a rhetorical device for thinking about the future.[13]

[13] On the other hand, as artificial researcher Pedro Domingos notes in his *The Master Algorithm* (2015), "people worry that computers will get too smart and take over the world, but the real problem is that they're too stupid and they've already taken over."

We are only just glimpsing the world that might emerge from the ontological and political reorderings entailed by shifts in the categories of personhood and citizenship. Teilhard de Chardin, in tying theology and biological evolution to the "pell-mell march of 20th Century technology" (Davis 2015), worked at a macro-scale, the longest of longue durées, to sketch how the *noosphere* would encircle the world. This biological layer of networked human thought and its products has been interpreted as an eerie prefiguration of the internet: in 1995, a staff writer for *Wired* magazine wrote that Teilhard "saw the Net coming more than half a century before it arrived. He believed this vast thinking membrane would ultimately coalesce into 'the living unity of a single tissue' containing our collective thoughts and experiences" (Kreisberg 1995).

Here, Teilhard held that the world would eventually become conscious of itself as individuals are increasingly roped into a collective form of consciousness, submerging us into enforced resonance with all of the thoughts, wills, and passions of our fellow creatures until a final convergence alights the universe afire with consciousness (Davis 2015). The emerging noospheric super-mind would thus coalesce at the Omega Point.

Teilhard was writing, at times in obscure terms—with an eye toward placating his Jesuit censors—because he was forging a new way out of the contradictions he saw between the teachings of the Catholic Church and the findings of early twentieth-century evolutionary science, especially with regard to the place of humanity cosmologically as well as terrestrially (he was directly involved in excavations related to the Piltdown Man hoax and in the analysis of Peking Man).

Deeply affected by his experience as a stretcher-bearer in World War I, Teilhard pushed his theory to counter the possibility of evil or meaningless suffering, and his writings frame the violence and suffering he witnessed as part of a grander path to enlightenment. This idea also handily managed to absolve him of any responsibility to participate in a detailed critique of global politics and eliminated the possibility that evolution was random. The historical, emergent, and temporary quality of humanity, however, represented a serious scientific undoing of Teilhard's faith-based worldview in which all people would ascend into oneness through spiritual love (a topic about which he held especially esoteric views).

At the same time, it is hard not to sense that the enforced resonance of fellow creatures in unity was somehow an unwitting refraction of the worst fascist values of the era, including but not limited to the eradication

of idiosyncrasy, plurality, and democracy, mashed through the disciplining of difference, the fetishization of technology, and technologized violence, all in the utopian guise of progress, prosperity, security, and belonging. The regressive reconfigurations of state and society in response to a changing global order, both then and now, in concert with the apotheosis of emerging technologies (viewed as efficient, clean, intelligent, and security-enhancing) are presented as safeguards of health, agency, and well-being (though at times they are anything but).

His work was scorned by both theological and scientific communities as heretical or ascientific, but a review by Hortense Powdermaker (1963) (a contemporary in her own right) describes *The Phenomena of Man* (1955) in the pages of *American Anthropologist* as "highly stimulating," and states that one need not accept any religious doctrine to learn from Teilhard's aim to develop a coherent perspective on humanity's extended experience as an unfolding whole, rather than taking it as a final explanation or a metaphysical system.

We might examine his work on energy. The extended experience of evolution, he wrote, is driven by two forms of energy: radial and tangential. Radial energy is energy from without—for example, the traditional laws of physics. Tangential energy, a kind of "divine" energy, drives organisms from within. Teilhard identified three levels of tangential energy: "Pre-life" ran through inanimate objects like rivers. "Life" is the tangential energy of beings that are not (yet) self-reflective. In humans, he called it "consciousness." Of course, this mirrors the Great Chain hierarchy that fuels contemporary far-right ideologies.

He noted that radial energy was dominant in things such as rocks, while their tangential energy was barely visible. Rocks, therefore, are best described by the laws that rule radial energy (physics, for example). But for animals in which tangential energy, as life or consciousness, is present, the laws of physics can only partly describe their dynamics. Teilhard concluded that where radial energy was dominant, the evolutionary process would be characterized by traditional scientific laws of necessity and chance. But for organisms in which tangential energy was significant, the forces of life and consciousness would best the laws of chance and natural selection (Kreisberg 1995). As the world approaches the Omega Point, a fire of consciousness spreads in ever-widening circles, breaking free of its material substrate, until the whole planet is covered with sentient incandescence. All beings—from rivers, to trees, to men—would be brought into radical singularity.

Significantly, and in arguing that mechanistic development was always accompanied by developments in consciousness, Teilhard predicted that as part of the march toward the Omega Point, machines would beget machines that would eventually form a single, vast, organized mechanism (Davis 2015). Artificial-life aficionados take this a step further, imagining that virtual lifeforms like Sophia are beings trying to break through. Chris Langton, a founder of artificial life research, states that "there are these other forms of life, artificial ones, that want to come into existence. And they are using me as a vehicle for reproduction and for implementation" (Levy 1993, 120). Sophia and enthusiastic spokesmen like Langdon and Goertzel present compelling narratives of peaceful and prosperous AI-enhanced human futures.

So, from a certain point of view, Teilhard's paradigm offers a rationale for modern life as a painful but necessary stage that must be passed through on the way to the Omega Point, with the scale of his work precluding meaningful critique of political, economic, social, and environmental disasters. Likewise, Teilhard-driven transhumanisms and related techno-utopianisms have a strong tendency to look away from contemporary conflicts, sublimating attention to modern-day sufferings beneath visions of a silicon-engendered Mindfire. The fact that Teilhard completed *The Phenomena of Man* as World War II raged in his homeland presents an object lesson in presenting an apparently depoliticized elucidation of humanity's place in the world that simultaneously promotes the ultimate expression of necropolitics: all succumb.

On the other hand, the world as imagined by Teilhard and then reflected in experiments such as the blockchain protocol of cybercurrency, AI, and early internet design does contain the kernel of an antidote to the economic inequalities, political frictions, and social upheavals that have characterized hierarchy-life within a failing neoliberal matrix in the long 1930s. As I consider the rather bleak looking path of a globalizing world inflected with new practices of personhood, citizenship, and intelligence, I cannot help but to notice the spectacular failure of political, economic, and social policy to capture and account for all of the entities whose fates are inextricably linked, and to wonder if Teilhard's ideas about radical heterarchy may yet provide some clues for designing a way out of our own extinction.

As Sean Cubitt (2015) points out in an excellent lecture tracking the political entailments of media images, it was once unthinkable that African Americans or women be allowed to vote; proposals that they be given an

equal voice were viewed a preposterous. And although we continue to struggle in the United States with fair representation because of gerrymandering, requiring voters to show specialized forms of identification, disenfranchising felons, and mandating citizenship as a prerequisite to voting, most people have been able to see that an expansion of the We to allow non-white men to vote is not only welcome but necessary.

Similarly, by choosing to stretch our imaginations and then acting upon potential resolutions to ecological, political, and social crises, we can, as contemporary Franco "Bifo" Berardi (2019) argues, awaken a futurability that as yet lies dormant. Accepting the radical inclusion of others of all stripes might also seem preposterous, even impossible. And perhaps we should draw the line somewhere. I offer robot citizen and river person as beacons on the horizon of possibilities that should be investigated. But as we move further into the Anthropocene, a time of increasing violence, inequality, and rising seas, an immediate dismantling of the Great Chain of Being in favor of the Great Heterarchy—a horizontal organizational strategy that recognizes the interdependence of all things while embracing their essential differences—might be the only thing that saves "Us."

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J. Rayner et al. (eds.), *Back to the '30s?*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41586-0

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